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# Skelton's satirical poems

in their relation to

**Lydgate's Order of Fools, Cock Lorell's Bote,  
and Barclay's Ship of Fools.**

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**Inaugural-Dissertation**

der

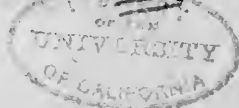
philosophischen Fakultät der Universität Bern

zur

**Erlangung der Doktorwürde**

vorgelegt von

**Albert Rey.**



**BERN.**

Buchdruckerei K. J. Wyss.

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Von der philosophischen Fakultät auf Antrag des Herrn  
Prof. Dr. Müller-Hess angenommen.

Bern, den 21. Juni 1899.

*Der Dekan:*  
**Prof. Dr. E. Michaud.**

Meinem lieben Onkel

Joseph Rey

Gymnasiallehrer in Burgdorf

gewidmet.

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## INTRODUCTION.

«Who now reads Skelton?» a famous author of the seventeenth century once asked. Abraham Cowley put this question which might have been suggested as early as the end of the sixteenth century. Strange fate of literary renown! In our turn we might ask today: «Who now reads Cowley?» And yet we know that Milton ranked this Cowley together with Spenser and Shakespeare.

The question, however, remains. John Skelton is little known nowadays, though he is the greatest satirist of the age of Henry the Eighth. Critics for a long time were, and partly are still, unjust to him. They did not see in him a true poet, but a jester only. It is worth remarking that Skelton's character has undergone an analogous fate to that of his French brother in mind, Rabelais. Skelton's life and death like that of Rabelais is surrounded with the dim owl-light of popular legend. In Skelton as well as in Rabelais we must set apart the popular tales and anecdotes from history.

Even modern critics are singularly misled in passing sentence upon our satirist. Taine, in his *History of English Literature*, calls Skelton «a clown, a tavern Triboulet, composer of little jeering and macaronic verses». The earliest

critics<sup>1)</sup> show themselves hardly more favourable to our author. They had no taste for the humour and «pith» of his satire. Puttenham, in the reign of Elizabeth, was the first critic who found fault with the rude rhymes which only pleased the popular ear. Meres, another Elizabethan critic, repeats the dictum. Warton, the author of the History of English Poetry, seems to adopt the opinion of these authorities. Yet he allows the merit of the personifications of Skelton's «Bowge of Courte». That Dr Johnson does not approve of Skelton's style is quite a matter of course. «Skelton cannot be said to have attained great elegance of language», he says. To which the editor of Johnson's Dictionary adds: «If Skelton did not attain great elegance of language, he, however, possessed great knowledge of it.» Other more impartial critics are not wanting. Henry Bradshaw honours Skelton with the epithet «inventive». And we have the eulogious testimonies of Caxton, of Churchyard who states that «he was seldom out of princis grace». Of Pope's disparaging review on Skelton we shall speak in the proper place. We must here leave out the numerous recent reviews. In general they acknowledge the merits of our author.

Skelton, at any rate, is worth while to be studied, and our task is much facilitated by the very conscientious edition of Skelton's poetical works by the Rev. Alexander Dyce, London 1843, 2 vols. This standard-work for everything concerning Skelton is prefaced with an «Account of Skelton's Life and Writings» full of information. Our following biographical sketch of Skelton is entirely based upon the researches of A. Dyce<sup>2)</sup>.

## SKELTON'S LIFE.

John Skelton either descended from a family of Cumberland or of the county of Norfolk. The year of his birth is about 1460. Concerning his academical training we know that he first went to Cambridge and then to Oxford, where he took the degree of «laureatus». This, as Dyce informs us,

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<sup>1)</sup> see Disraeli, *Amenities of Literature*.

<sup>2)</sup> We have at hand an American edition of Skelton, principally according to the edition of A. Dyce, Boston 1856, in three vols.



was a degree in grammar, including rhetoric and versification, taken at the university, on which occasion the graduate was presented with a wreath of laurel. Some critics have overseen this circumstance and considered Skelton as a poet laureate according to the modern acceptation of the term. It is true that Skelton himself has suggested this belief. In the fourth poem against Garnesche we find the following line: « A Kyng to me myn habyte gaue ». The question, after all, is of little concern for our present purpose.

However it may be, Skelton was very proud of his title of laureate and never lost an opportunity of letting it be known. Caxton, in 1490, had « The boke of Eneydos compyled by Vyrgyle » overseen and corrected by « mayster John Skelton, late created poete laureate in the vnyuersite of Oxenforde », and a little further down Caxton supposes Skelton to have « dronken of Elycons well ». This high eulogium at least proves some notoriety enjoyed by our author.

It is impossible to determine at what period Skelton commenced his career as a poet or at what dates his pieces were first printed, because of nearly all his writings the first editions have perished. Besides this, we know from the titles enumerated in the poet's own « Garlande of Laurell » that a certain number of his compositions are now lost. Among the first productions of his poetical activity we may range the poem « Of the death of the noble prince, Kyng Edward the forth », in stanzas of 12 lines with the Latin refrain « ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio ». Edward the Fourth died in 1483, and the poem must have been written soon after this event. The next poem was on the death of the Earl of Northumberland. This nobleman was slain during a popular insurrection in Yorkshire. His son Henry Algernon Percy afterwards became the poet's patron. There is a great deal of classical learning in these lines. « Clio », « Elyconys well », « marciall Hector », « cruell Mars », « Atropos, of the fatall systers iii » etc. must come to the poet's aid to give vent to his distress.

Skelton not only was laureated at Oxford, but also at Louvaine. On this topic we have a very eulogious Latin epigram by a certain Robert Whittington. Another complimentary notice is given in Henry Bradshaw's « Lyfe of Saynt Werburghe », printed in 1521. To all ancient poets he submits his little book :

Fyrst to maister Chaucer and Ludgate sentencious,  
Also to preignaunt Barkley nowe beying religious,  
To *inuentione Skelton* and *poet laureate* ;  
Pray them all of pardon both erly and late.

A fews years later Skelton was also admitted *ad eundem* at Cambridge and wore the white and green dress, probably meaning a white dress and a wreath of laurel. To this Barclay alludes in the prologue to his Eglogues: « Mine habite blacke accordeth not with grene. »

In 1498 Skelton took holy orders, and became priest after having been ordained sub-deacon and deacon. We then hear of two other poems now lost, composed at the creation of the Prince of Wales (Arthur, eldest son of Henry the Seventh), and of the Duke of York (Prince Henry, afterwards Henry the Eighth). These events took place in 1489 and 1494 respectively. Henry the Eighth was then a mere infant, and Skelton certainly was not appointed tutor to that prince till some years later. This appointment is another proof of the high consideration in which the poet stood with his contemporaries, and we may infer from this fact that Skelton was not that ludicrous character he is often represented to be. The tutor devoted himself seriously to the instruction of his royal pupil, and wrote for his best a treatise called « *Speculum Principis* » which also has perished<sup>1)</sup>. Mrs. Thomson in her *Memories of the Court of Henry the Eighth* says « that the instructions bestowed upon Prince Henry by his preceptor, Skelton, were calculated to render him a scholar and a churchman, rather than an enlightened legislator ». For it is to be noticed that Prince Arthur, Henry's elder brother, then was still alive and Henry originally destined by his father to be an archbishop of Canterbury. There is little doubt that this first ecclesiastical education influenced upon Henry the Eighth's church reform and his peculiar views in the reformatory movement.

In Prince Henry's ninth year Erasmus dedicated to the boy an ode which is important for us because it contains a very high-pitched praise of Skelton: « . . . te adhortarer, nisi et ipse jamdudum sponte tua . . . eo tenderes, et domi haberes Skeltonum, unum *Britannicarum literarum lumen ac decus*, qui

<sup>1)</sup> mentioned in the « *Garlande of Laurell* ».

tua studia possit, non solum accendere, sed etiam consummare »<sup>1)</sup>. (Dedication of the ode.)

The mother of Henry the Seventh, the Countess of Richmond and Derby, was a patroness of literature. Skelton most probably alludes to her in his *Garlande of Laurell*, v. 1219 ff:

Of my ladys grace at the contemplacyoun,  
Owt of Frenshe into Englysshe prose,  
Of Mannes Lyfe the Peregrynacioun,  
He did translate, enterprete, and disclose.

Skelton also wrote a Latin *Elegia* in *Comitissam de Derby*. She died in 1509. All these facts seem to prove that Skelton enjoyed the favour of the court and the prince's grace. In the Court of Requests, however, under anno 17. Henry vii, we find this puzzling notice: « 10 Junii apud Westminster Jo. Skelton commissus carceribus Janitoris Domini Regis ». A. Dyce cannot guess the reason of this restraint, and there is even no confirmation that this Jo. Skelton is identical to our author, though there is an analogous episode narrated in the « *Merie Tales of Skelton* », in the chapter: « How Skelton was in prison at the commaundement of the cardinall ». Yet Dyce has pointed out the untrustfulness of these apocryphical *Merie Tales*<sup>2)</sup>.

Some years after having taken holy orders Skelton was made rector of Diss in Norfolk, but the informations about his residence there are very scanty. It is said that he kept a concubine and that he was called to account and suspended from his ministerial functions by his diocesan, the cruel Richard Nikke or Nix, who was chiefly instigated by the Dominicans. Skelton, on his deathbed, is said to have declared she was his wife, but that he had been too much of a coward to confess marriage, which was then considered a greater crime in an ecclesiastic than concubinage. Another witness, Anthony Wood, affirms that « at Disse and in the diocese Skelton was esteemed more fit for the stage than the pew or pulpit ». This testimony and similar anecdotes about the irregularity of his life and his buffoonery as a preacher no doubt gave

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<sup>1)</sup> Erasmus gives a very interesting account of the origin of this ode (see Dyce).

<sup>2)</sup> One of these *Tales* relating the roguish tricks of a miller very much resembles the merry pranks of the German *Eulenspiegel*.

rise to the « Merie Tales of Skelton » already mentioned. There is a curious analogy between these anecdotes and those which surround the life of the joyeux curé de Meudon.

Now we must briefly mention the quarrels of our satirist with Garnesche, Gaguin and Lily. Of his dissension with Barclay we shall speak farther on.

Against the foremost of these adversaries of Skelton we have four poems, composed, as the author affirms, « by the kynges most noble commaundement ». Christopher Garnesche was a gentleman usher to Henry the Eighth, and dignified with knighthood. Skelton was angry at his rapid elevation from a very low position of life. Garnesche, at least, must have been a courtier of some note and attainments, for in 1514 he was an attendant to Princess Mary, then embarked for France to join there her bridegroom Louis the Twelfth. Again in 1515 he is mentioned in connection with Margaret, widow of James the Fourth, and during the visit of the Emperor Charles the Fifth to England in 1522 « Master Garnyshe house » was among the lodgings occupied on that occasion at Greenwich. We may therefore assume with some right that Sir Garnesche was not a man without credit. What gave rise to the enmity between him and Skelton is left to conjectures.

Robert Gaguin « of the Frenshe nacyon » was another literary antagonist of Skelton's. He was minister-general of the maturines and famous for his abilities and learning. The best known of his various works is entitled « Compendium supra Francorum gestis », a kind of universal history. Skelton must have highly estimated Gaguin's talents, for else he would not have given him in his « Garlande of Laurell » a place among the assembly « of poetis laureat of many dyuerse nacyons » (v. 324)<sup>1</sup>). In 1490 he went to England in the quality of ambassador of Charles the Eighth. That Skelton knew him personally we may infer from the following passage in the « Garlande » just mentioned :

A frere of Fraunce men call sir Gagwyne,  
That frownyd on me full angerly and pale.

It may not be out of place here to state that the translation of a Latin poem of Gaguin « De fatuis mundanis » is

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<sup>1</sup>) Skelton still refers to Gaguin's authority in « Why come ye nat to courte », v. 712 ff.

interpolated in Barclay's *Ship of Fools* under the title of « Fooles that are ouerwordly »<sup>1)</sup>.

By Bale, *Scriptores Illustres Britanniae*, p. 652, ed. 1559, we are informed that Skelton wrote certain Latin verses against the then renowned grammarian William Lily. The latter however seems to have paid back his aggressor in the same coin. Some passages in the « *Garlande of Laurell* » however make us believe that Skelton at times repented of the severity of his satirical attacks<sup>2)</sup>. Skelton's relations to Alexander Barclay will be matter of discussion further down.

The « *Garlande of Laurell* », as the title-page makes us know, has been written during a residence at Sheriff-Hutton Castle, where the Countess of Surrey was the poet's patroness. Elizabeth Stafford was the second wife of Thomas Howard Earl of Surrey and mother of another poet still more illustrious than Skelton, Henry Howard, Lord Surrey. She was then at Sheriff-Hutton as a guest of her father-in-law, the Duke of Norfolk, famous for his victory at Flodden-Field, familiar to the readers of *Marmion*. Skelton was one of her attendants there. The poem is in the main allegorical, and the incident which suggested the title may really have happened.

This poem, too, informs us that Skelton sometimes resided at the ancient college of the Bonhommes at Ashridge.

A momentum of the widest bearing in the life of our author are his relations to Cardinal Wolsey. This powerful prelate first employed the poet's pen, and Skelton with just hope, as it seems, expected promotion from his patron in his ecclesiastical career. The « *Garlande of Laurell* » was dedicated « To my Lorde Cardynals right noble grace », though this dedication is appended to the Satire against the « Douty Duke of Albany », where it has nothing to do. Another of the poet's productions, « *The Boke of Three Fooles* » has the following dedication: « M. Skelton, Poete Laureate, gaue to my Lord Cardynall ».

But if Skelton once has been the Cardinal's favorite, it is undoubtedly better attested that he afterwards was his « dearest foe ». The origin of this savage enmity between the satirist and the Lord Chancellor cannot be traced back. At any rate, we are stupified at the boldness Skelton exhibited

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<sup>1)</sup> cf. Zarncke's ed. of Brant's *Ship of Fools*, p. 242.

<sup>2)</sup> see Dyce, *Some Account*.

in his attacks against the mightiest man of England after the king. Dyce, it is true, suspects that « Colyn Cloute » and « Why come ye nat to Courte » were not printed during Skelton's lifetime, but only circulated in manuscript. The supposition seems plausible enough. It is not our task to narrate at length the furious debate between Skelton and Wolsey. « Colyn Cloute » already contains some pointed or even blunt strokes against the cardinal, e. g. :

Stand sure, and take good footing,  
And let be all your motyng,  
Your gasyng and your totyng,  
And your parcyall promotyng  
Of those that stande in your grace ;  
But olde seruauntes you chase,  
And put them out of theyr place.

This passage evidently alludes to some personal wrong done him by the cardinal. The motives of the minister's attitude in this quarrel are unknown to us. Perhaps the arbitrary mood of Wolsey would best explain them. If Skelton scourged the clerical pomp and sumptuousness, there is little doubt that Wolsey felt the sting. The cardinal's lofty manners and princely expenses were a matter of offence to many of the king's subjects, and even to the king himself. The most hated instance of this magnificence was the building of Hampton Court, which the cardinal, in order to appease the jealousy of the king, presented to the latter with all its splendid furniture. Things changed at the end of the following century. The clergy lost much of their wealth and influence. « The state kept by Parker and Grindal seemed beggarly to those who remembered the imperial pomp of Wolsey, his palaces, which had become the favourite abodes of royalty, Whitehall and Hampton Court, the three sumptuous tables daily spread in his refectory, the fourty-four gorgeous copes in his chapel, his running footmen in rich liveries, and his body-guards with gilded pole-axes<sup>1)</sup>. » This exaggerated display of splendour and the cardinal's haughtiness to suitors peculiarly irritated those of the cardinal's enemies who well remembered his low descent as a butcher's son.

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<sup>1)</sup> Macaulay, Hist. of England, Chap. III. — Speke, Parrot, v. 540: Suche pollaxis and pyllers, suche molys trapte with gold.

As yet « Colyn Cloute » was rather a lenient and discreet satire against the great « parvenu ». The tone becomes singularly sharp and virulent in the two next satirical invectives, in « Why come ye nat to Courte » and in « Speke, Parrot »<sup>1)</sup>. The former is Skelton's most direct satire against Wolsey, and if this prelate could pass silently over the allusions in « Colyn Cloute », he certainly was not willing to forgive the author of « Why come ye nat to Courte ». There are different anecdotes on the relations of the two clerical enemies at hand, but they are out of place here. The only essential thing to know is that the cardinal at last used his power to get rid of his dangerous enemy. He sent out officers to seize him, but he found means to escape and took sanctuary at Westminster, where he was protected by the abbot Islip, a friend of his. There he died on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1529, twenty-four years before the great French satirist Rabelais. Of him, like of dying Rabelais, the last words are reported. He is said to have enunciated a prophecy on the downfall of Wolsey. The cardinal did not outlive long his terrible antagonist: he died the next year on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November at Leicester Abbey. His disgrace already began on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1529, when the great seal was taken from him and delivered by the king to Sir Thomas More. A charge of high treason was put forth against Wolsey, and his death saved him the dishonour of execution. Skelton was buried in the church of St. Margaret. Over his grave these words are inscribed: « Joannes Skeltonus, vates Pierius, hic situs est ».

Addison somewhere says that we like a book much better by knowing if the author is either fair or black, of a gentle appearance or of a choleric one. As to Skelton, unfortunately, we are left entirely to conjectures. There is no portrait of his extant which deserves confidence.

## SKELTON'S WORKS.

Before entering upon our proper task we must here briefly mention Skelton's poetical works which have not yet been spoken of or which are not to be discussed hereafter,

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<sup>1)</sup> cf. Lindsay's « Testament of the Papingo », a Scottish « Speke, Parrot » against James the Fifth.

as forming no part of our disquisition. Among them «The Boke of Phyllyp Sparowe» may duly be ranked first. Coleridge, a competent judge, in his *Literary Remains*, has characterized it «an exquisite and original poem». The subject of this dainty little book — but a «book» it is — is one of the most delicately fanciful, the death of a sparrow that was «slayn at Carowe». The only fault we find with the poet is to have made his lament somewhat too long, though the length is intended. Catullus was better inspired in writing an elegy on his Lesbia's little bird containing eighteen lines only. Skelton amends his, as it were, national fault of exceeding length with an extraordinary expense of wit and fancy. A comparison of «Phyllyp Sparowe» to the «Ververt» of the French poet Gresset would afford no common interest as an illustration of the difference of the ages and literatures. We think the Frenchman has outdone the Englishman in easiness and art of narrative.

«The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng» forms a very good instance of Skelton's coarser kind of humour. We may suppose that if Skelton has been generally regarded as a disgusting and loathsome buffoon, this offspring of the poet's muse must be made answerable for the main part. The portrait of the ale-wife and her gossips would not dishonour our modern naturalists. It cannot be denied that the poem, as the poet says of his verse in «Colyn Cloute», has in it «some pyth»; but it is still more ragged than «Colyn Cloute».

«The Garlande of Laurell» already mentioned, on the contrary, is very decorous, but unfortunately wanting pith. If a satirist must needs be personal, yet this composition becomes dull by the excess of the author's own self. The whole poem is but one long self-coronation, and the rare livelier passages do not compensate the general tediousness. However, we quite agree with Dyce who says of the *Garlande of Laurell*: «In one respect the *Garlande of Laurell* stands without a parallel: the history of literature affords no second example of a poet having deliberately written sixteen hundred lines in honour of himself». This poem certainly ranks not high in intrinsic value, yet it deserves our special attention for offering some precious hints relating to Skelton's life and works. The prototypes of the «*Garlande of Laurell*» are Chaucer's «*House of Fame*», his «*Parlement of Foules*» and Lydgate's «*Temple of Glass*». The opening of the poem has



many similitudes to that of the « Bowge of Courte », the standard-work of our dissertation, to which we shall return at full length.

Skelton, finally, must be mentioned as a dramatic writer. Among several pieces, however, only the « goodly » interlude entitled « Magnyfycence » still subsists. Besides this, Skelton's own authority tells us that he had written an « Enterlude of Vertue », a « Comedy callyd Achademios », and a drama named « Nigramansir », all of them lost. « Nigramansir » was still known to Warton who analyses it in his History of English Poetry. Though Skelton cannot be compared to the Elizabethan dramatists, his « Magnyfycence » at least proves a real progress on other contemporary productions of the same kind. Under his allegorical characters we feel quick flesh and a lively spirit. The style is easy and full of vigour. « If we accept his abstract personations merely as the names, and not the qualities, of the dramatic personages, « Magnificence » approaches to the true vein of comedy » <sup>1)</sup>).

It is not our intention to give here a complete catalogue of Skelton's works, but we refer the reader to Dyce's edition for further information about our satirist. Skelton, however, must still be mentioned as a lyrical poet, though the lyrical part occupies but a small room among his works. These lyrical poems are collected under the title: « Dyuers Balettys and Dyties solacyous ». The very first of these short popular songs is a master-piece of its kind (« My darlyng dere, my daysy floure »). Skelton, at moments, proved himself also a poet of sacred songs, as in his « Woffully araid » and « Now singe we ».

Most of Skelton's works are written in the so-called Skeltonian metre. If Skelton did not invent this peculiar metre, he surely employed it more frequently and with greater success than any of his predecessors or followers. Swift, next Butler's Hudibras, in his poems appended to « Gullivers Travels », perhaps comes nearest to his model in skill and ease. Disraeli characterizes well this sort of verse: « The Skeltonical short verse, contracted into five or six and even four syllables, is wild and airy. In the quick-returning rhymes, the playfulness of the diction, and the pungency of new words, usually ludicrous, often expressive, and sometimes felicitous, there is a stirring spirit which will be best felt in an audible reading.

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<sup>1)</sup> Disraeli, Amenities of Literature.

The velocity of his verse has a carol of its own. The chimes ring in the ear, and the thoughts are flung about like coruscations.» Skelton sometimes has been called a macaronic poet, but the instances where he introduced Latin and French lines are relatively few. He was not, as Warton supposed, though with hesitation, the inventor of this strange poetical fashion, for we find traces of the macaronic style as early as the Coventry mysteries<sup>1</sup>).

Skelton's literary character, as we have seen already, has often been misunderstood or criticised unjustly. The reason of this fact may be sought in the coarseness of some of Skelton's pieces. Even one of his most popular poems, «The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng», is at the same time one of his lowest productions in the eyes of a more refined age. Thus we may easily explain Pope's reviling and slanderous review in the «First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace imitated», 1737. This partial and unfair criticism originated at the reprint of Marshe's edition of «Skelton's Workes» in 1736. Pope found Skelton's verses to consist «almost wholly of Ribaldry, Obscenity, and Billingsgate Language»<sup>2</sup>). The terrible sentence was sanctioned during a long time by the literary public. Nowadays, Pope is condemned in his turn for his excessive refinement and polish. Our age calls for simplicity and even for rudeness, and the blunt coarseness of «Elynour Rummyng» seems to us likely to win more modern readers than the cold and correct pomp of the «Essay on Man». «Beastly» Skelton has more pith than «humane» Pope.

## THE BOWGE OF COURTE.

In speaking now with some detail of the «Bowge of Courte» we may best acquaint the reader with the subject by quoting the following passage from Warton, *Hist. of E. P.*: «The poem called the Bowge of Court, or the *Rewards of a*

<sup>1</sup>) see Dyce, *Some Account*.

<sup>2</sup>) quoted from Dyce's ed. of Skelton. — Pope's critic, after all, may be influenced by the great authority of Milton. The latter calls Skelton, though he does not even pronounce his name, the Vicar of Hell (*Areopagitica*).

*Court* [bowge means probably bouge or kitchen, an Old French word; we may translate it with «diet allowed at Court», see notes to Dyce's Skelton], is in the manner of a pageaunt, consisting of seven personifications. Here our author, in adopting the more grave and stately movement of the seven-lined stanza, has shewn himself not always incapable of exhibiting allegorical imagery with spirit and dignity. But his comic vein predominates». Or rather his *satirical* vein.

It is autumn. The sun «in Virgine by radiante hete enryped hath our corne». Luna is smiling at our folly and unsteadfastness. The poet calls to mind the great authority «of poetes olde». Like them, he intends to give mankind good advice, but in a way to touch the truth under a disguised form. The task is a hard one. «Ignoraunce full soone dyde me dyscure» [expose]. She calls him too dull «for to illumyne», and advises him «his penne alwaye to pulle». When his mind is thus drawn and cast up and down, he lies down to rest and soon falls asleep. The dream which now follows is to show us what Skelton meant to teach. — The *procédé* surely is not new, but very common since Chaucer, nay, in the whole literature of the middle ages. Skelton delights in this poetical dress, for he once more uses it in the outset of the «Garlande of Laurell», where the poet falls asleep in the forest of Galtres. Yet we must allow Skelton not to have lacked skill in a form so often used and hunted down.

He is dreaming that he lies at Harwich port, in «Powers keye», the house of «mine host». Lo! there a ship comes sailing forth, with a rich rigging and of high apparel. She casts anchor in the port. Merchants arrive to see what cargo she has, and they find there «royall marchaundyse». The poet will not remain behind and he too mixes in the crowd. But he does not find any acquaintance. Suddenly a man's voice rises above the noise: Mark, you all! The ship you see here before you is called the «Bowge of Courte». The owner of this stately vessel is a Lady of estate, named Saunce-pere (Sans-pair). Whoever will buy her merchandise must pay it dear, its name is Favour. The lady is so richly and gorgeously attired that the poet has too little «connyng to reporte» her beauty. Above her throne is written a sentence inspiring the beholder with fear: «Garder le fortune, que est mauelz et bone!» Beware of your curiosity! Here comes a gentlewoman of the lady, called Danger, who will chide you for your bold-

ness. «She trowed that I had eten sause». She asks the poet's name, and for the first time we learn that he calls himself Drede (Dread). Lady Danger seems to dislike her interlocutor and leaves him with an angry look. The unhappy poet, quite abashed and benumbed with fear, is cheered up by the gentlewoman Desire, kinder than the first. She advises him to speak boldly and to fear nothing. As Dread has no friend to support him, she gives him a precious jewel «Bone Auenture», therewith to make his best in the «Bowge of Courte». There is one thing to be kept well in mind :

She that styreth the shyp, make her your frende ...  
Fortune gydeth and ruleth all oure shyppe :  
Whome she hateth shall ouer the see boorde skyp.

«Bone Auenture» has the power to win her friendship. Our poet gladly accepts the present, and «in a rowe, of marchauntes a grete route» he sues to Fortune for Favour — «and Fauour she us gaue». Thus ends the Prologue.

The poet (Drede) then begins the voyage under good auspices. Favour is with them all. His courage, however, soon gives way: «under hony ofte time lyeth bytter gall». In the ship he perceives seven suspicious-looking persons :

The fyrste was Fauell, full of flatery,  
Wyth fables false that well coude fayne a tale ;  
The second was Suspecte, whiche that dayly  
Mysdempte eche man, with face deedly and pale ;  
And Haruy Hafter, that well coude picke a male ;  
With other foure of theyr affynyte,  
Dysdayne, Ryotte, Dyssymuler, Subtylte.

Fortune is their friend. They dance and make merry. Dread has a mind to join their company. But they dislike the newcomer and shun him. At last, Fauell first addresses Dread and compliments him on his attainments :

Loo, what it is a man to haue connynge !  
All erthly tresoure it is surmountynge.

He tells him that Fortune loves him well, but there are «dynerse» that envy him and seek his ruin. Of course Fauell is his friend, «though he says it». «I cannot flatter, I muste be playne to thé». He offers his service, and will speak for Dread a bold word. «Trust me, ye maye not fayle».

The other fellows are «lewde cock wattes». Fauell leaves him with the injunction not to mention a word he has said.

Dread thanks him duly. But it seemed to him that Fauell wore a cloak lined with doubtful «doubleness». And when this worthy man spoke, his stomach often did «reboke» [belch]. Fauell has met with Suspicion, and Dread overhears their conversation. Suspicion cannot suffer Dread, and he agrees with Fauell that they will «holde hym up for a whyle». With «whom and ha, and with a croked loke» Suspicion goes up to Dread. He warns him of the gentleman who has just spoken of him. «He wyll begyle you and speke fayre to your face», he says. Above all he is anxious to know if Fauell has not spoken of him. Another good counsel is dropped: «lytyll to saye, and moche to here and see». Suspicion entirely trusts on Dread who is the only man on board to whom he would confess himself. Dread assures him of his fidelity, but gently insinuates Suspicion might keep his secrets for himself. The latter quits Dread saying that he will come again and talk more about this.

In the mean-time, Haruy Hafter arrives jumping, «lyghte as lynde». A jolly fellow, with a gown all furred with fox. But as he gazes at Dread, the poet thinks that his purse was half afraid. After a hearty shake-hands Haruy Hafter shows great concern for the sad looks of his new acquaintance. He presumes, with some right indeed, that Dread makes verses, and amiably offers to scan them! But swiftly he is coming to the point: They must get friends. Haruy would be glad to be taught by Dread in reading and in music, for he cannot sing a note in the book.

And lerne me to singe, Re, my, fa, sol!

And, whan I fayle, bobbe me on the noll.

He cannot comprehend how Dread takes so much pleasure in these petty things — but begs pardon for his want of politeness. A bright prospect opens to Dread: never had any man won the favour of his lady so rapidly. Haruy Hafter hopes to become a friend to him.

This pleasant new friend has no sooner left Dread, when another member of the rout meets him, and Dread once more finds occasion to observe them. The new character seems to be a haughty one. His hood is lined with indignation and he frowns as if he would swear by «Cockes» blood. Disdain

is the name of this « comerous crabes » [troublesome crab]. He converses with Haruy Hafter on poor Dread. Disdain is angry with this « John Daw », this « doctour Dawcocke ». What is he doing here on board the ship? He is quite sure that Dread will stand in their light. Therefore let us find some means to cast him over board, says Haruy Hafter. And to save the *dehors*, let us first pick up a quarrel with him and then « outface » him. So Disdain makes a furious assault on Dread who thinks the assailant mad. Disdain gives vent to his passion in the plainest manner. Dread shall meet once with him, for Disdain cannot see him thus cherished by Favour.

While Disdain pours out his gall against Dread, lo! there rushes in Riot, « a rusty gallande, to-ragged and to-rente »<sup>1)</sup>. His suit is in a pitiful plight, and his speech accords well with it. « He had no pleasure but in harlotrye. » He commends Dread nothing worse than to eat, drink and sleep. Above all, by merry, man! Come and let us try the luck of the dice. Riot has no good chance, he runs « aye on the loss ». Fortunately, if he loses, his « lemman Malkyn » gets money for him. To her he bequeaths his poverty. « Tyll I come, haue here is myne hat to plege. » A poor pledge, for we know that his hair has grown through his hat! — Gone is the knave! We draw an *ex profundis* with Dread. It may be true that Tyburn groans for this wight by day and night.

The trial of Dread, however, is not yet at an end. Now yonder walks Disdain with Dissimulation in sad communication. Dread cannot overhear their words, but they seem to be ill-boding. Dissimulation approaches Dread. He has in his hood two faces, the one lean like a pined ghost; the other looking as if he were going to slay his interlocutor. This dangerous man carries a knife in one of his sleeves, whereupon the dreadful word « Mischief » is written; in his other sleeve is a golden spoon full of sweet honey, with another sentence of terrible meaning. Dissimulation speaks to the poet and praises his virtue and literature, as Haruy Hafter had done before. And like Fauell he assures Dread to be plain and faithful. It is true that « all our courte is full of dysceyte ». Therefore, to prove his loyalty, he denounces his

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<sup>1)</sup> cf. Barclay's *Ship of Fools*, ed. Jamieson, I, 302. Of foolish beggars: « In garmentis goynge raggyd and to rent ».

companions as impostors and deceivers. The slanderer then retires after having protested that he is Dread's friend.

As he departs, a seventh visitor suddenly appears behind Dread. Bo! he exclaims, frightening thus our poet who does not at all like this jest. Deceit, too, like so many others, bids Dread welcome and warns him of his pretended friends. But as he is whispering in his ears, Dread suddenly beholds on every part other ill-auguring features. They look as if they would slay him. At the very moment when the poet is about to jump over the board to avoid being killed, he awakes and writes down his dream :

I wyll not saye it is mater in dede,  
But yet oftyme suche dremes be founde trewe :  
Now constrewe ye what is the resydwewe.

This last line indicates our task. We fear our analyse, though rather long, may have given but a faint idea of the humour and pith of this allegorical poem, certainly one of the best of Skelton's longer pieces not written in his own metre. Though Skelton felt more at ease in the short verse of his own name, here he showed a great mastership in the official poetry.

## JOHN LYDGATE.

We now turn to Dan<sup>1)</sup> John Lydgate. If an author could claim greatness by the fertility of his pen, Lydgate ought to be classed among the first in rank. His numerous literary productions exceed the number of 250. Among this multitude of works in almost every kind of literature we meet with one work containing no less than 20 000, another 30 000, a third one even 36 000 verses. Unfortunately, the quality does not match the number of verses.

It is obvious that it cannot be our task to enter into a detailed scrutiny of the author and his works. Some general hints will suffice for our purpose.

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<sup>1)</sup> Dan, Lat. dominus, Fr. Dom, Sp. Don, was a title commonly given to monks. It often occurs in Chaucer, where it is also used in a comical sense : « Dan Burnel the asse »; and « Dan Russel the fox ». (Nonne Prestes Tale.)

Dan John Lydgate was born about 1370 at Lydgate (or Lidgate) in Suffolk. Of his life we know very little. A « Testament » which claims Lydgate for its author does not set forth any direct facts. The one fact which appears ascertained is his having been monk at Bury St-Edmund's, a Benedictine Monastery. Lydgate further is said to have been a friend of Chaucer's; at any rate he was his disciple and immediate follower, like Occleve. Lydgate tells us that he composed a poem under Chaucer's immediate directions. — The greater portion of Lydgate's works is still unprinted. A selection of his minor poems has been published for the Percy Society (Vol. II. ed. by J. O. Halliwell, London 1840).

## HIS « ORDER OF FOOLS ».

As the title of our investigation purports, we have to deal with one of the shorter poems of Lydgate only, entitled « The Order of Fools ». Among a great number of rather tedious compositions by that fertile author, « The Order of Fools » may claim some originality, though we shall see further on that Lydgate is not the first author who wrote on this favourite mediaeval subject, which might be called also the favourite subject of all times and places. Lydgate's Order of Fools has the under-title: « A tale of threscore Folsys and thre ». It consists of twenty-four eight-lined stanzas, with a refrain at the end of each stanza: « he shal never the [thrive] », or « let him never the », or another variation.

The Order of Fools has begun, we are told in the first line of the poem, many years ago, but the convent of late has won a great number of adherents. Bacchus and Juno (we should rather expect Venus) have broached the cask. Marchol or Marcolf is the founder, patron and president of this distinguished order, consisting exactly of sixty-three members. Each of them has his patent to prove his membership. It is not easy to dress an exact list of these 63 members, and we shall not even try to introduce the whole society to the « benevolent » reader who will lose nothing for all that.



## THE BOWGE OF COURTE AND THE ORDER OF FOOLS.

We have seen the most lively picture of court-vices in Skelton's «Bowge of Courte». Though this poem is not dated, we may still conclude from several circumstances that it was written after Barclay's translation of Brant's *Narrenschiff* dated 1509. The Bowge of Courte is no doubt one of the most direct satires on court-life. There are no direct traces of an attack against Skelton's great antagonist, the Cardinal Wolsey, but the date falls most probably after 1520<sup>1)</sup>, when Skelton shot his first arrows against the powerful prelate. The Bowge of Courte, not so directly as the «Book of three Fooles», stands under the influence of Barclay's Ship.

But the influence of the «Order of Fools»? We can hardly state any direct dependency of Skelton's Bowge of Courte from the poem of Lydgate. The latter falls under another head of inquiry: it forms a most important link in the fool-literature in general. Lydgate is far from being the first in this sphere of literature. For the fool-literature is as old as literature itself, and it is not likely to perish of consumption in the next centuries to come. In our own times we have specimens which prove the vitality of this branch of literature: what are our modern satirical periodicals, as *Punch*, *Simplicissimus* or even the resurrection of the «*Narrenschiff*» etc., if not modernizations of old patterns? The famous sentence: *Stultorum infinitus est numerus*, is a standard-phrase of all times and applicable everywhere. It is especially a commonplace expression in the decaying epochs, in the middle ages as well as in ancient or in our own times. Brant himself is by no means the first to chastise the fools<sup>2)</sup>. The classical authors already mark the difference of the «*stultus*» and the «*sapiens*». The Old Testament often dwells upon this topic. Thence they are introduced into the mediaeval literatures. In Germany we find a special professional caste of fools as early as the end of the twelfth century. Then the fools began a long and happy reign. Every rank of society sent its deputy: the number of the two-legged fools was in-

<sup>1)</sup> see p. 51.

<sup>2)</sup> see Zarncke's ed. of Brant's *Narrenschiff*.

creased by delegations from the fauna: asses, apes, hares and the cuckoo formed their main enforcement; pagan divinities, as Bacchus and Venus, did not disdain to join the chorus; wise men, as Solomon, Horace and Juvenal, offered to guide the different orders or to become their founders. Germany took the leadership in the merry rout, and it is not by chance that a German poet found the best expression for this singular order of society.

In England<sup>1)</sup>, Lydgate's « Order of Fools » is preceded by the « Speculum Stultorum », of the twelfth century. The author of this Latin poem was Nigel Wireker<sup>2)</sup>, a precentor of Canterbury under King John. Like Lydgate he had in view the foundation of a religious fraternity. One of the chief episodes of the « Speculum » is the foundation of the « Ass's Order » by the ass Burnellus (or Brunellus). This Brunellus is inclined to retire from the world, but the existing orders not satisfying him, he conceives the plan of founding a new one, wherein all the advantages of the several orders should be united. The poem thus is directed specially against the monastic orders.

Lydgate's Order of Fools has sensibly degenerated in the course of time. How pale and lifeless they look! There remains little in our mind when we have patiently passed in review the long file of fools or rather sinners and wrongdoers, all of them condemned « never to the »! The stern and moralizing monk of Bury St-Edmund's does not allow us to laugh at them. The outset promises more than the rest makes good: Bacchus and Juno and Marcolf sit in the committee. These persons of respect cannot fail to inspire us with confidence. Alas! the next stanza begins with a dry and lifeless enumeration of follies and vices. So we prefer abiding a moment with the three patrons and founders. Bacchus and Juno: we already expressed our doubt concerning the second divinity. For as yet we were accustomed to regard Juno as a respectable lady. Herford too, in his Literary Relations, has read Venus instead of Juno, for in a note he refers to the beginning of the Order of Fools, and then adds: *Venus* also presides over Murner's « Geuche ». — Marcolf is generally quoted to-

<sup>1)</sup> see Herford, Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the sixteenth century.

<sup>2)</sup> The poem is edited by Th. Wright in Vol. I. of the Anglo-Latin satirical poets and epigrammatists of the twelfth century. London 1872.

gether with Solomon. There exists a whole literature on these two names<sup>1)</sup>. The character of Marcolf has passed through singular and various transformations. First he is the serious and worthy rival of the wise king Solomon, and the original form of the subject is a philosophical disputation. Thus Morolf appears to be a serious debater in Notker's Psalms, though he pleads for the wrong. In the twelfth century this conception undergoes a change. The interrogator of Solomon becomes his parodist. The decent philosopher turns a witty but coarse peasant, and as such the representative of his order, the French «vilain». Evidently this jester belongs to the famous Eulenspiegel cycle, and is a brother in mind of Aesop, Panurge<sup>2)</sup>, the Kalenberger, Scogin, perhaps also akin to the Shakespearean fools.

From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century Marcolf subsists under three forms: as a cunning proverb-maker and as such the father of Hendyng, whom ten Brink calls the personification of dexterity of mind. French influence, as it seems, formed the transition in this evolution. The Solomon and Marcolf branch, however, never thrived in England. The Proverbs of Hendyng appeared 150 years before Lydgate's Order of Fools; the witty and much listened-to popular philosopher has sunk so deep as to become the chief of fools. Still this transformation is due to another French source<sup>3)</sup>. Marcolf not only is here represented as a quick-minded debater, but directly as a wicked person and marvellously apt for the presidency of a body of fools of Lydgate's kind. For it has been justly remarked<sup>4)</sup> that Lydgate's fools are not merely simpletons but actual wrongdoers. The French poem entitled *Veez cy une desputacoun etc.* just quoted, formed the direct source of Lydgate's poem. This French version continued its popularity in the sixteenth century, when it found

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<sup>1)</sup> Schaumberg, Salomo und Morolf, in Beiträge, ed. Paul and Braune, Vol. II; Kemble, The Old-English Salomon and Saturnus.

<sup>2)</sup> Solomon and Marcolf still make their appearance in Rabelais: «Qui ne s'aventure N'a cheval ni mule», ce dit Salomon. — «Qui trop s'aventure Perd cheval et mule», Marcoul lui répond.

<sup>3)</sup> «Veez cy une desputacoun entre Salamon ly saage, et Marcoulf le foole», printed by Kemble, l. c. p. 77 ff. — The other source is «Proverbes de Marcoul et Salemon», reprinted by Crapelet: Proverbes et dictions populaires, Paris 1831.

<sup>4)</sup> Herford, Lit. Relations.

a rival in the Latin dialogue named « Collationes », henceforth the standard work of the Marcolf story. The character of Scogin has grown out partly from this third conception of the Marcolf character. Yet the first edition extant of « Scogin's Jests »<sup>1)</sup> dates from 1626 only, so that it is difficult to distinguish genuine stories from apocryphical ones. We may add as a curiosity that whilst « calembour » and « espiègle » in French still attest the renown of Marcolf's fellow jesters, the name of Marcolf himself has wholly perished.

When we analysed the « Bowge of Courte », we heard the poet call to mind the great authority of the old poets :

whyche full craftely,  
Under as couerte termes as coude be,  
Can touche a trouth and cloke it subtylly.

It may be regretted that Skelton does not name these « poetes olde ». Does he allude to Greek or Roman antiquity, or to his own old literature, to Chaucer or Langland or even to Lydgate? We are unable to answer this question. Yet we think he does not allude to Lydgate. The words « couerte termes » at least seem to exclude the assumption, for the « Order of Fools » is of the most direct downrightness. Every vice is marked by a most blunt blemish and is branded without any « subtlety ».

Nor can Skelton, as a simple comparison shows, have borrowed the conception of a « ship » from Lydgate. What might be ascribed to Lydgate's influence could only concern the moral characters of the vices stigmatized in the « Bowge of Courte ». There are seven *court* vices, as we may call them, which Skelton aimed at, namely, as we beg leave to repeat: Fauell, Suspect, Haruy Hafter, Disdain, Riot, Dissimulation, and Subtlety. It is true that these vices or follies are not altogether wanting in the « Order of Fools ». — Great attention especially is paid to *Fauell*, so stanza 10 :

Another foole withe countrefete visage,  
Is he that falsly wil flater and feyne;

or stanza 4 :

A double hert withe fayre feyned countenance;

<sup>1)</sup> Newly edited by Hazlitt.

or stanza 21 :

Tabourers withe theyr mokkes and false dupplicité  
Please more these dayes, whan stuffid is theyr male  
Withe farced flateryng, God lete hem never the!<sup>1)</sup>

Lydgate once more attacks the « covert losengeours » at the very end of his poem<sup>2)</sup>. — *Suspect*. Skelton depicts us this antipathetic man as walking with « whom and ha, and with croked loke ». His head is full of jealousy, his eyes rolling, and clapping with his hands. A close perusal of the « Order of Fools » did not lead us to any analogy. — *Haruy Hafter*. This delightful and lively character does not appear in Lydgate's poem. He seems to have been a popular figure in the middle ages, for his name frequently occurs in Skelton and before him. In the « Bowge of Courte », he is represented as the prototype of a presumptuous and intriguing courtier and pick-pocket. In the fourth poem against Garnesche he warns his antagonist by comparing him to that character :

Harkyn herto, ye Haruy Hafter,  
Pride gothe before and schame commyth after ;

and again, in « Why come ye nat to Courte », Skelton speaks of Hauell and Haruy Hafter. The interlude Magnificence frequently uses « to hafter » as a verb. Another instance of the respectable old age of the name is in Langland's Piers Plowman, Passus V, though it serves here as a model for covetousness :

(Auaricia) And thanne cam coueytise can I hym noughte descryue  
So hungriliche and holwe *sire Heruy* hym loked. —

*Disdain*. This hateful wretch is rather a picture of Envy and Hatred together :

His face was belymmed, as byes had him stounge : ..  
Enuye hathe wasted his lyuer and his lounge,  
Hatred by the herte so had hym wrounge,  
That he loked pale as assches to my syghte.

<sup>1)</sup> cf. Barclay, Prol. to the Ship of Fools :

But if he haue a great wombe, and his Cofers ful  
Than is none holde wyser bytwene London and Hul.

<sup>2)</sup> cf. Skelton, B. of C. : he ware on hym a cloke that lyned was with doubtful doublenes.

In Phyllip Sparowe «odyous Enui» is represented with nearly the same words:

His lyuer, his longe  
With anger is wronge; etc.<sup>1)</sup>

In Lydgate we only find the fool «who hathe disdayn to folke in poverte», or him who despises his fellow and neighbour. — Next comes *Riot*, «a rusty gallande, to-ragged and to-rente». His head is heavy, and for cause. His eyes are bleared, his face is shining like glass. Langland's Auaricia<sup>2)</sup> is likely to have lent him some features, at least covetousness also has two bleared eyes and a lousy hat. Lydgate contents himself to mention drily «he that is a riatour al his lyf», or the «night motoners that wil no warnyn spare». — *Dissimulation*. There is one sign characteristic for this vice both in Lydgate and in Skelton: two faces in one hood. Lydgate especially emphasizes on this topic: «he that hathe twoo faces in oon hoode» (stanza 3); «Late Janus bifrons have none interesse, | Whitche in oon hoode can shewe a double face» (stanza 23). This point may well be borrowed by Skelton from Lydgate. In the *Bowge of Courte* the corresponding passage runs as follows: «Than in his hode I sawe there faces tweyne». — *Deceit*. An artful creeping fellow suddenly starting behind Dread's back, and a sharper of the kind of Haruy Hafter. Look at your purse, that it may not be plucked off! The whispering cheat is the more dangerous for his concealed means. Lydgate has no type of this kind. He only speaks of the «tunge spreynt with sugre, the galle kept secret»; or of the fool with a «counterfete visage» (as we have seen before); or of the wicked counsellors who kiss with Judas and cut a man's purse.

This comparison sufficiently elucidates the total independency of Skelton from Lydgate. If we have proofs that Skelton knew Lydgate well, and in some places borrowed from him, these imitations are very scanty and, as it appears, merely accidental. Indeed there is no trace indicating that Skelton was inspired by the «Order of Fools» when he wrote his «Bowge of Courte». The form and outward dress of the two

<sup>1)</sup> see also the description of Enuyos Rancour in the *Garlande of Laurell*, v. 753 ff.

<sup>2)</sup> *Piers Plowman*, B-Text, Passus V, v. 190 ff.

poems are essentially different. Skelton, it is true, highly estimated Lydgate and spoke of him with respect on various occasions. One testimony deserves special reference. He says in Phyllyp Sparowe :

Also Johnn Lydgate  
Wryteth after an hyer rate ;  
It is dyffuse to fynde  
The sentence of his mynde ;

but the slight blame is compensated in the following lines :

Yet wryteth he in his kynd,  
No man that can amend  
Those maters that he hath pende [penned] ;  
Yet some men fynde a faute,  
And say he wryteth to haute.

We doubt rather if the « Order of Fools » is affected by this criticism ; or then it concerns the stern and rigid morality of this poem. Skelton again honours the monk of Bury by ranging him together with Gower and Chaucer<sup>1)</sup>. Indeed Lydgate shows himself grateful by appointing Skelton prothonotary of Fame's Court<sup>2)</sup>. But if references to Lydgate are not rare in Skelton, in the Bowge of Courte few of them are to be found. Allusions to Langland and Chaucer are much more frequent, and also to Barclay's « Ship of Fools » and « Cock Lorell's Bote », as we shall see. — A remark concerning Lydgate may still be placed here. In stanza 6 of the Order of Fools a jay jangelyng is mentioned. This bird frequently occurs in mediæval poetry as the emblem of inconstancy and slanderous chatting. In Skelton there are several instances thereof, so in Phyllyp Sparowe, v. 396 :

The ianglynge iay to rayle ;

and ib. v. 1268 ff :

The gyse now a dayes  
Of some ianglynge iayes  
Is to discommende  
That they cannot amend.

<sup>1)</sup> Garlande of Laurell, v. 390 ff, and 1101.

<sup>2)</sup> ib. v. 432.

And again in the *Garlande of Laurell*, v. 1261 ff., which is at the same time a curious example of a repetition: the poet borrows from himself. Dyce remarks to the jay jangling: «an epithet generally applied to the jay by our old poets». Therefore nothing proves that Skelton's image derives from Lydgate's *Order of Fools*.

Thus we arrive at a negative result in comparing the «*Order of Fools*» to the *Bowge of Courte*. The only, as we suppose direct, congruence remains in Skelton's picture of Dissimulation and Lydgate's fool with two faces. Lydgate evidently borrowed his type from the Roman mythology, and he actually names Janus bifrons (stanza 23). Skelton in his turn may have used this touch for the delineation of his dissimulator. In the whole remaining part there is a gulf between the two authors, in conception as well as in execution; and though Skelton extolls his «maister Lydgate», we think that the disciple has totally outshone his teacher. Life is wanting in the well-turned verses of the fertile monk: instead of amending us by true pictures of men, he delivers us a boring list of vices and follies, so that our revolted patience is all the more inclined to commit some foolish trick. The well-intentioned moralist has lost his labour by inspiring us with a dread tediousness. Skelton, on the other hand, is far from having composed a master-piece. The outset of his poem does not rise above mediocrity, and the old theme of the dream does not swerve from the beaten track of mediæval dream-literature. The interest, however, is increasing the more we advance in reading, and at the end rises to a considerable dramatic power. The description of the court-vices is a lively and happy one, and its merit has been allowed even by a rather prepossessed critic, Warton, who declares that the delineation of the characters «is not unlike Ariosto's manner in imagining these allegorical personages». We feel thankful to the poet of the «*Bowge of Courte*» for having confined himself to the representation of seven vices only; they fully weigh up the sixty-three follies of Lydgate by their vivid realism and fulness of detail. They are the work of a satirist who is at the same time an artist, whilst the «*Order of Fools*» is that of a moralist, and of a moralist only.



## COCK LORELL'S BOTE.

How glad we are to pass from the barren and dull morality of Lydgate's fools to the vivid and refreshing picture of the fellows of Cock Lorell's Bote! True life animates this poem, if we leave out the dry and excessively long enumeration of the diverse trades and callings. The whole conception of the poem is much more interesting than Lydgate's, and we are much readier to follow the author's fancy.

«Cocke Lorelles Bote», a satirical poem, no date, but probably published about 1510. It was found in the Garrick Collection, British Museum. A new edition from the unique copy printed by Wynkyn de Worde has been published by E. F. Rimbault for the Percy Society in 1843 (vol. VI). The name of the author of the poem is unknown to us, and unfortunately also the beginning of this original composition, a circumstance which renders its understanding more difficult.

The poem «presents a curious and graphic picture of the habits and morals of the lower classes of society in the latter part of the reign of Henry the Seventh». Rimbault presumes that the idea of the «Boat» is likely to have been suggested by Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*, some time before translated by Alexander Barclay, in 1508, and printed by Pynson in 1509. The hero of the poem, Cock Lorell, appears to have been a notorious vagabond, and very popular at the time of the publication of the «Bote», so as to insure its success by the patronship of his name<sup>1</sup>). We find him second in a list of professional rogues: «After him [another rogue], succeeded by general councell, one Cocke Lorell, the most notorious knave that ever lived: by trade he was a tinker», but if there was any occasion, «he would cast his profession in a ditch». He ruled among his knaves «almost two and twentie yeares, until the year An. Dom. 1533». (Samuel Rowland: *Martin Mark-all, Beadle of Bridewell, etc.* 4<sup>to</sup> 1610.) Rowland also mentions our hero as the compiler of a Catalogue of Vagabondes. This latter reference alludes to a tract, printed in 1565 and 1575, entitled «The Fraternitye of Vacabondes; as wel of ruflyng Vacabondes, as of beggerly, of Women as

<sup>1</sup>) but see further on the meaning of «lorel».

of Men, of Gyrls as of Boyes, with their proper names and qualities. With a description of the crafty company of Cousoners and Shifters. Whereunto also is adioyned the XXV Orders of Knaues, otherwyse called a Quartern of Knaues confirmed for euer by Cocke Lorell. . . . Imprinted at London by John Awdely ». Cock Lorell is further mentioned in a satirical poem in black letter, called « Doctor Double Ale ». Next we find his name in Heywood's « Epigrams upon three hundred proverbs », 1566 ; and in Ben Jonson's masque of the « Gypsies Metamorphosed ». It may afford some interest to state that Cock Lorell's Bote was adorned with woodcuts borrowed from the « Ship of Fools », yet, it seems, without being particularly applicable to the « Bote ».

The fragmentary beginning of the poem abruptly introduces us to what is evidently the crew of the famous captain Cock Lorell. The fair sex has the first representative in a sort of Wife of Bath or something worse :

She had a desyre ofte to be wedde,  
And also to lye in an other mannes bedde.

She is on good terms with her husband, for

Yf he call her calat, she calleth hym knaue agayne,  
She shyll not dye in his dette.

Cock Lorell, whom we must imagine to be her interlocutor, is quite amazed at her fine womanly attainments and is glad to accept her as his laundress and even more. The next who presents himself to the captain is a currier, with his brother, a cobbler « as ryche as a newe shorne shepe ». They offer him a leaky pot, for other jewels they have none. The leather-dresser so well dresses his leather « that it wolde drynke water in fayre weder ». A shoe-maker joins them. He and the cobbler have a little bit of a quarrel for a piece of leather from a ram's skin. With « sorrow » Cock placed them together in the boat. Now another passenger arrives with two bulldogs « at his taylor ». And « that was a bocher without fayle ». He is of an unprepossessing appearance, and of a cruel temper : « He had as much pity as a dog ». The two next newcomers are still more disgusting, the one a « fermourer » [scavenger], his friend a « canyell raker ». Their presence gives Cock and his men the nausea. The reason thereof is that they lack water to wash themselves. These worthy

Irishmen receive a seat apart « amonge the slouenly sorte ». Another couple of irksome fellows are coming, and after them a miller, a jolly fellow « with a golden thome ». There is, as Tyrwhitt, Gloss. to the Canterbury Tales, observes, an old proverb: Every honest miller has a thumb of gold<sup>1)</sup>. That the miller was considered half a thief is a judgment which appears to have received sanction in the whole literature of the middle ages. In our poem, however, this crafty man will find his match in Cock Lorell:

Cocke bad hym grynde cherystones and peson  
To make his men brede for a season,  
By cause whete was very dere.

Now a respectable person makes his appearance, a *pardon*. He has the list of the whole crew, and Cock Lorell can hear the names « poll by poll ». Special attention ought to be paid to this circumstance, for as Herford justly remarks, this gives the company of the boat some appearance of an order, though not quite similar to that of Lydgate's Order of Fools. From the pardoner's list we must confine ourselves to pick out only a few names that merit our interest. There we meet at once with our friend Haruy Hafter, spelt, it is true, « halter »: « and hary halter seler at tyborn the ayer ». The variant reading « halter » is not to invalidate our conviction about the identity of this hary halter and Haruy Hafter in the Bowge of Courte, for in Skelton the name is frequently misspelt. — The pardoner delivers his roll conscientiously for two whole pages following until Cock interrupts him with the ingenious remark:

Pardoner now ho and sease .  
Thou makeste me wery, holde thy pease.

The question what advantage is to be had in this fraternity interests him much more. To that our pardoner answers with his story of the religious women who some time ago dwelled at « the stewes banke ». To this topic we shall return. The pardoner further explains that there is yet a chapel save

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<sup>1)</sup> Cf. Chaucer, Prol. to the C. T., the Miller:

Wel coude he stelen corn and tollen thryes;  
And yet he hadde a thombe of gold pardee.

For further instances see Skeat, Notes to the Prol. of the C. T.

Of whiche ye all the pardon haue.

They will be absolved of every good deed, and he promises them a life of luxury and sloth.

And the pope darlaye hath graunted in his byll,  
That every brother may do what he wyll.

And pope Nichol grants them still more :

The coughe and the colyke, the gout and the flyxe,  
With the holsome tothe ache.

If one of the brethren should happen to die, let him not rue it, for «to the chyrche dogges shall cary hym», and the knell shall be rung in the midst of the Thames. So many things are still granted that he needs must have some drink before he can finish his long speech. — Now when Cock looked aside he saw the streets crowded all over with people of all crafts and trades <sup>1)</sup>. All these claim a room in the «boat». This gives the poet an occasion to dress a long and surely *not* poetical list of professions and trades, which however has been called with reason «a store-house of the trade-nomenclature of the early sixteenth century». At the end of the enumeration very strange craftsmen appear: thieves, whores, murderers, crakers [?], facers [?], children killers, spies, liers, cursers, chiders, dissimuling beggars etc., swearers and outrageous laughers, surmowisers [surmisers], ill-thinkers etc., slovens, flatterers and two face-bearers, sluts, drabs, and counsel-whistlers: all these denominations are familiar to us since Lydgate, and betray the original moral purpose of this kind of satire. Suppress them, and you have a very picturesque and realistic representation of a pleasure-party of the lower classes of society, and we must admire the great skill of the unknown author. We do not hesitate to place his picture above the «Ship of Fools» itself. The most dramatic portion of the «Bote» is no doubt the moment of starting. How all is stirring with real life! Each man has an oar to handle or is engaged in some other business connected with the management of the ship:

<sup>1)</sup> Herford, *Literary Relations*, estimates that this passage derives directly from Brant's *Narrenschiff*, Prol. v. 10: «all strassen, gassen sindt voll narren». The phrase does not occur in Barclay's translation.

There was non that there was  
But he had an offyce more or lasse.

Into this busy hive the shrill sound of Cock's whistle,  
the signal of the chief, suddenly breaks:

With that they cryed, and made a shoute,  
That the water shoke all aboute ;  
Than men myght here the ores classhe,  
And on the water gaue many a dashe.

Merrily they hoist their sails and row forth, sounding  
their trumpets and singing a merry sailor's song: « heue and  
howe rombelowe ». A gun is fired for joy. They banish all  
sorrow and prayer, and take with them mirth and sport.

Thus they daunsed with all theyr myght  
Tyll that phebus had lost his lyght ;

and then comes pale Lucina to take « her sporte amonge the  
clowdes blewe ». Now Cock thinks it proper to weigh anchor  
and to row forth traversing all England. When they are in  
the main, they bless their ship and drink St. Julian's health.  
The shore is soon out of sight and the boatswain is blowing  
a last yelling whistle — and the poet does not see them any  
longer. He is sorry for having been left ashore<sup>1)</sup> and returns  
home. He meets with a company of religious men and white  
nuns. They also want to see Cock Lorell, and when they  
hear that he is gone « than were they sad euerychone », and  
return home. The poet tries to comfort them and advises  
them to meet with Cock Lorell another year. Oh! this Cock  
is a distinguished leader, his partisans form a body of the  
highest importance: Cock has in his hand every third person  
of England!

If we allow Skelton to have some « pith » in his verse,  
we cannot fairly withhold this qualification from the anony-  
mous author of Cock Lorell's Bote. Even if this composition  
be an imitation as to the conception, it is one of those works  
that become true originals by the spirit which is infused into  
inert substance. We feel this creative power in reading « Cock  
Lorell's Bote », a power that at times reminds us of the

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<sup>1)</sup> Barclay already expresses this idea, Prol. to the Ship of Fools:

We are full lade and yet forsoth I thynke  
A thousand are behynde, whom we may not receyue.

striking vividness of the greater author of the Canterbury Tales. A competent judge has delivered the following sentence on « Cock Lorell's Bote »: « A genuine realist, with a keen eye for detail, for local colour, and an extraordinary intimacy with the London life of his time, he [the author of C. L.] had little in common with the clerical poet who prided himself on the elevation of a Muse which would not deign to sing of Philip the Sparrow. » (Herford, Lit. Relations.)

## SKELTON AND COCK LORELL'S BOTE.

The humorous fragment of the voyage of Cock Lorell's crew betrays quite a different mind from that of the clumsy author of the « Order of Fools ». Nay, if the anonymous writer of Cock Lorell's Bote were the inventor of the subject, his merits would surpass those of Skelton himself. In popularity this poem was hardly outdone by any other production of the contemporary literature. Since Chaucer, if we except the popular songs of the Chevy Chase, Robin Hood and some others, no lines of truer humour and vigour were produced, and their pith, though sometimes of the coarsest kind, only finds a match in Skelton's « Elynour Rummyng » or in some other of his « ragged » satires. In one respect the author of the « Bote » stands above Skelton: in the good nature and kindness of his humour and in the indulgency of his satire.

The question of chronological precedence next arises. « Cock Lorell's Bote, as we have seen, has no date on its title-page, but we may presume with Rimbault that it was printed about 1510. Its publication probably precedes that of the « Bowge of Courte »<sup>1)</sup>. Both, surely, come after Barclay's « Ship of Fools », first printed in 1509. The conception of a *ship*, as it seems, derives from that successful novelty in literature, and a ship was the more to become popular in a nation of islanders. The allegorical ship of Brant transforms herself into a real English vessel with Barclay, into a stately merchant-man in Skelton, into a large rowing-boat with the *anonymus* of « Cock Lorell ». The device of the « Bote » shows

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<sup>1)</sup> see page 51.

a much nearer resemblance to the «Ship of Fools» than either to the «Order of Fools» or the «Bowge of Courte». Yet we dare not speak of an imitation; it is rather a new variation upon an old theme. If the basis of the edifice belongs to another, plan and materials of the building are of the architect's own.

The poem naturally is divided into two distinct portions, the description of the crew of which Cock Lorell is the chief, and the account of the voyage. As to the first heading, we are in a *milieu* quite different from the religious order of the threescore fools or the seven court-representatives. We might properly term them representative fools of all trades and lower conditions of England and especially of London. The manner in which the poet introduces and describes his characters does not always reach that of Chaucer. But if we have not the fulness of detail as in Chaucer we must confess that we do not miss it, for the poet evidently dwells with preference on the lowest members of society. But each individual lives before us, we see them all acting and gesticulating in their own familiar attitudes, attitudes which paint as well the individual as the guild or trade to which he belongs, and thus the poet succeeds in suggesting to us a picture of almost every class of society of the time. The picture is enlivened by a sound though somewhat rude humour, as in the portrait of the laundress, the cobbler and shoemaker that tear the ram's skin; or of the butcher with «his hosen gresy upon his thyes»; the scavenger, that loathsome fellow who causes Cock and his men to spit for nausea; the miller who steals flour and puts chalk therein. These portraits are the best drawn in the poem; the rest of the company is hardly more than enumerated. The long pardoner's roll contains a lot of names of tradesmen and places which no doubt were very familiar to the cockneys of the time, and in these hidden allusions contemporary readers must have found a merriment now lost for a modern reader. The presence of the pardoner with his roll containing the «quaterage of euery man» suggests another question. Does the roll allude to the patent of the threescore fools of Lydgate and thus constitute a new order of fools or knaves, or is this only a poetical contrivance to vary the *procédé* of enumeration? The pardoner's grant and the episode connected with it have not any direct relation to the fundamental idea of the «Bote», and we are

inclined to consider this *hors-d'œuvre* as an influence of Lydgate's poem, or even Wireker's order founded by the ass Brunellus. — For the incredible length of the list of craftsmen our author alone is answerable. Yet he does not stand alone in mediæval literature with this tedious kind of enumeration. The reader of Rabelais knows well that the merry priest of Meudon not always avoided this perilous cliff. Perhaps we forget that we are modern readers, and what we consider to be an unsuitable portion was in the eyes of their contemporaries a topic of delight and favour. People then liked a detailed exposition of the subject the narrator put before them. Homer himself perhaps is the best instance of this taste for diffuseness. Books also were then rare, and the reader was not hunted down with periodicals and every hour's publications; and the well furnished nomenclature of the «Bote» may still afford no common interest to the historian of civilisation. — The vivid and distinct description of the boat's crew and of the moment of starting makes good for the tiresome passage immediately preceding it. There is a great power of observation in it which betrays a first-hand witness. With the exception of some few touches which bespeak the author's classical scholarship (Phebus, and pale Lucina, Mercury and Hesperus) the whole poem is pervaded by a genuine popular spirit.

The fundamental idea, that of satirizing society under the image of a ship's company, evidently is taken from Brant's «Ship of Fools» mainly, but not totally, through the medium of Barclay's adaptation. Herford ingeniously pointed out that «Cock Lorell's Bote» is an attempt to fuse two motives together: that of a religious order and a ship of fools. Brant's lazy mechanics (chap. 48 Eyn gesellenschiff) degenerate in Barclay into real knaves. But the «Bote» is a fusion of two separated chapters in Brant (Gesellenschiff and Schluraffenschiff, chap. 48 and 108) which are already put together in Barclay, where the first stanza of the chapter entitled «The unyuersall shyp and general Barke or barge» runs thus:

Here shall Jacke, charde, my brother Robyn hyll  
With Myllers and bakerys that weyght and mesure hate  
All stelynge taylers: as Soper: and Manshyll  
Receyue theyr rowme: bycause they come to late  
The foulest place is mete for theyr estate



A rowme for rascoldes hard by the pompe shall be  
That stynkyng placis and knaues may agre<sup>1)</sup>.

This might rather be considered as an introduction to the following chapter in Barclay: The vnyuersall shyp of crafty men, or laborers. The voyage itself corresponds to the universal ship or Schluraffenschiff.

In Lydgate's « Order of Fools » we saw the tendency of amending men's follies by preaching morality and incessantly warning the fool that he shall never thrive. This didactical and moral purpose which still remains the foremost scope in Brant and Barclay, is quite abandoned in the « Bowge of Courte », though maintained in the « Boke of Three Fooles » (which is of secondary importance only), and almost invisible in « Cock Lorell's Bote ». Satire takes the place of morality, and if there is to be found out a moral teaching, it is felt through the keen sting of satirical irony, in most cases a better shot than dull morality.

As we cannot fairly determine the respective dates of our two poems, we must content ourselves with the assumption that there exist analogies between the « Bowge of Courte » and « Cock Lorell's Bote ». However they are not so apparent as to be allowed to speak of a direct relation. We rather are convinced that the « Ship of Fools » furnished the general idea, and that each of the two authors started from this common point to arrive at a wholly different and personal result. Skelton's main device evidently aimed at a court satire; the author of Cock Lorell had in view a humourous and lenient satire on the lower classes of London society. Each of them succeeded in his proposed task, and we have thus two literary productions quite different in form and meaning.

The name of the captain of the « Bote » still deserves a special examination. The expression *lorell* is very often used in middle English texts; it means a good-for-nothing fellow, the older spelling is *losell*, and both are derived from the verb to *lose*, so *lorel* properly is a lost man. Spencer has *lewde lorrell* in his Shep. Kal. (July), and the Glosse interprets it thus — Lorrell, a losell, shewing that lorrel was wrongly

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<sup>1)</sup> Barclay, Ship of Fools, ed. Jamieson II, 307. — cp. the last line to the stinking Irishmen in the « Bote ».

looked upon as the older form<sup>1)</sup>. *lorel* occurs in Piers Plowman (Pass. VII, v. 136): Lewed *lorel*! quod Pieres, litel lokestow on the bible; and (Pass. VI, v. 124): Some leyde here legges aliri as suche *loseles* conneth. In Chaucer also we meet with this word. Chaucer translates the latin « perditissimum quemque » by this word in his Boethius. In the Prol. to the Wife of Bath's Tale we read:

« Thus sayst thou, *lorel*, whan thou gost to bed  
And that no wise man nedeth for to wed. »

Skelton uses the expression in the same sense, so in Phyllyp Sparowe: (v. 488)

Ga, *lorell*, fa, fa.

Magnyfycence, v. 1912:

This *losyll* was a lorde and lyuyd at his lust  
And now lyke a lurden he lyeth in the dust.

In the First Poem against Garnesche:

Gup, marmeset, jast ye, morelle!  
I am laureat, I am no *lorelle*;

and again in the Fourth poem against Garnesche:

To cal me *lorell* ye are to lewde.

These instances may suffice to show that *lorel* was a current designation for a vulgar person. So we find it somewhat puzzling when Rimbault tells us that Cock Lorell really lived at the time of the publication of the poem. It seems to us probable enough that the name of the chief of knaves was then a *nom de guerre*, because it admirably suited the moral character of the bearer. Nothing therefore proves that Skelton was indebted for this word (*lorel*) to « Cock Lorell's Bote ». This may be the case with another analogy, the expression « heue and how, rombelow ». In Skelton's « Bowge » the passage runs thus:

I wolde be mery, what wynde that euer blowe,  
Heue and how rombelow, row the bote, Norman, rowe!

and once more in Skelton's « Deuoute Trentale » etc.:

<sup>1)</sup> cf. Skeat, Notes to Piers Plowman, Pass. VII. (B-text).

With, hey, howe, rumbelow<sup>1)</sup>.

The corresponding passage in « Cock Lorell's Bote » is thus penned :

For Joye their trumpettes dyde they blowe,  
And some songe heue and howe rombelowe. —

Next we must direct our attention to the character of Haruy Hafter. It is true that in the « Bote » his name is only once shortly mentioned, and with a somewhat altered spelling : « hary halter seler at tyborn the ayer ». These scanty analogies are far from being concluding. Yet we find other parallel passages in Skelton's works which are likely to confirm our hypothesis that Skelton sometimes remembered the poem of « Cock Lorell ». When the pardoner explains to Cock the profit deriving from his grant, he tells him the story of the religious women that dwelled « at stewes banke ». These singular women saints, unfortunately, were too kind and liberal, and the wind that came from Winchester blew them over the river where they are now going to build another fine mansion, fairer than the former one of the *halfe strete*. This *halfe strete* also occurs in Skelton's Magnificence, where it has evidently the same meaning, v. 2290 ff :

*C. Count.* And to the tauerne let vs drawe nere.

*Cr. Con.* And from thens to the *halfe strete*,  
To get us there some freshe mete.

Dyce, in his Notes to Skelton, explains the episode of the holy women : « the *wynde fro wynchester* alludes to the temporary suppression of the Southwark stews at the intercession of the Bishop of Winchester ». To Pope Nichol's grant in « Cock Lorell » : « the coughe and the colyke, the gout and the flyxe, with the holsome tothe ache » we have a curious analogy in Magnificence again ; Counterfet Countenance and his worthy friends wish Magnyfyce the following niceties, v. 2281 ff :

*C. Count.* In faythe, and I bequethe hym the tothe ake.

*Cl. Col.* And I bequethe hym the bone ake.

*Cr. Con.* And I bequethe hym the gowte and the gyn.

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<sup>1)</sup> A. Dyce, in his Notes to Skelton, has pointed out the high antiquity of this sailor's chorus, with additional examples.

The date of « Magnyfycence » may be fixed soon after 1515, as we can see from an allusion to king Louis the Twelfth of France, who died in 1515; for the praise of this prince's liberality<sup>1)</sup> cannot be applied to his predecessor, Louis the Eleventh, renowned for his extreme avarice. Thus « Magnyfycence » comes after « Cock Lorell's Bote ».

Our minute researches have raised but scanty treasures, but it seems obvious that Skelton was well acquainted with the poem of « Cock Lorell ». The reason of the heterogeneity of the two poems, the « Bowge » and the « Bote » lies, as may be presumed, in the absolute difference of the intentions. For we have proofs that in other circumstances Skelton did not disdain borrowing from other sources. In the « Bowge of Courte », as the very title of the poem shows, the allegory of the *Ship* is only of an accessory importance, and Skelton may have chosen this form for its then great popularity, so that he only followed or served the fashion and ruling taste of the time. He visibly laid his main stress on the dialogue between Dread, the poet himself, and the principal representatives of the court society, disguised under the old and soon worn-out form of allegories. That these allegorical characters hid real and living beings is clearly shown in Skelton's later satires, in which the dull mask of allegory was thrown off, and a battle with open visors and sharp weapons began. We must well keep in mind this peculiar standing-point of our satirist. He almost always had in view some practical purpose in composing a poem. His satire always aims at some personal mark, not mankind in general, as Lydgate did, or the author of Cock Lorell, or Barclay. If thus he wins in keenness and pungency of wit over his rivals, on the other hand he shares the fate of many well-gifted pamphleteers who shine forth only as long as the cause they defend or attack interests mankind in general. When the interests and passions they have kindled are dead, they leave us quite indifferent, and the only means to escape oblivion is the art and skill of the composition: the form. Skelton's « Bowge of Courte » still merits to be read, though it is far from being the best of his satirical works.

<sup>1)</sup> v. 283 of Magnyfycence; cf. Dyce, Notes to Skelton.

## ALEXANDER BARCLAY'S «SHIP OF FOOLS».

As to Barclay and his «Ship of Fools» we confine ourselves to that author and his work, as far as it is possible not to mention the original work of the German Sebastian Brant (1458—1521). Brant was born at Strassburg and studied at Basel where he became professor. In 1499 he left Basel for Strassburg. In 1494 he had published at Basel his «Narrenschiff»<sup>1)</sup>. Brant's fame rests on this book which is a satirical or rather moral and didactical poem on human follies. The «Narrenschiff» enjoyed such popularity that it was soon translated into Latin (by Locher) and into most of the leading languages of Europe. The immense success of the *Narrenschiff* is illustrated by the fact that Brant's friend, the famous preacher Geiler von Kaisersberg, delivered sermons on the chapters of the «Ship». The English version of Alexander Barclay dates from 1509.

We should transgress the limits of our task if we pursued the influence of the original composition. We only attempt to lay open the influence of the translation or *adaptation* of Barclay. On this term «adaptation» we must insist, for there is much in the English «Ship of Fools» that is genuine English. Barclay is a more national poet than Brant. The Basel professor is too learned and above all too classical. In form Brant is altogether new, but the substance is very often and designedly lacking originality. Brant ought rather to have observed his own time than to have imitated pagan and christian antiquity. He was too much of a scholar to be an open champion for Reformation, though he was an indirect promotor of this great spiritual movement. It is significant for his classical taste that he always sought some classical or biblical or other prototype for his fools. He modestly professes that he only meant to collect and translate quotations from biblical or pagan authors. Quotations from Greek are very rare, only Plutarch being used, and evidently by means of a Latin translation. The Latin literature is a rich field of harvest for Brant, and the Bible an inexhaustible source of inspiration, especially the Old Testament.

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<sup>1)</sup> see the standard-edition of Brant's *Narrenschiff* by Zarncke, 1854.

Disraeli (Amenities of literature) truly remarks: « There are works whose design displays the most striking originality; but alas! there are so many infelicitous modes of execution! » The reason of Brant's dulness is that he is by no means facetious, but by far too downright. The tone is invariably that of a moralist, not the stirring one of a satirist. Brant's fools are represented as contemptible and loathsome rather than foolish, and their *follies* might be more correctly styled *sins* and *vices*<sup>1)</sup>. Brant's didactical and moral intention shows itself very distinctly: he does not except himself but reckons himself among the fools, as a modest orator would include his own person in the auditory he intends to correct or to edify. The secret of the immense success of the book lies in the circumstance that it marvellously suited the popular feeling, exactly as a modern French novel becomes the rage of the public by serving its tastes or passions. Some critics attribute a large portion of the popularity of the « Ship » to the illustrations added to the text. It may well be so; certainly most of these woodcuts are of the finest of the age.

The plan of the « Ship of Fools » we suppose to be familiar to the reader. Its idea is the shipping off of several shiploads of fools of all kinds for their native country. The aim of the voyage however is shown at a distance only, and we are not always sufficiently reminded of the main purpose, the sailing to the « Land of fools », or « Narragonia » as the German text has it, playing at words. Brant's poem contains 112 chapters. « There is no attempt at classification, only an occasional association of ideas that causes one fool to suggest another »<sup>2)</sup>.

England was rather tardy in translating or fashioning the « Ship of Fools », which long before had begun a voyage round the world. Fifteen years elapsed from the first appearance of Brant's « Ship » to the first English metrical version of Barclay, dating from 1508, but printed by Pynson in 1509, the first year of the reign of Henry the Eighth. Barclay's translation is not the only one: in the same year an abridged prose translation by Henry Watson, from the French prose version of Jehan Droyn, was issued from the press of Wynkyn de Worde. This publication appears to have been inferior to

<sup>1)</sup> Jamieson, Barclay's Ship of Fools (Introduction).

<sup>2)</sup> Henry Morley, English Writers, vol. VII.

Barclay's both in text and illustrations. As to his adaptation Barclay excuses himself that it is «not translated word by worde acordinge to ye verses of my actour [author]». And he hopes the reader will hold him excused if he considers «ye scarsnes of his wyt and his vnexpert youthe». His tendency as an English moralist elucidates from the following passage: «I haue ouersene the fyrst Inuencion in Doche [German] and after that the two translations in Laten and Frenche whiche in blaminge the disordred lyfe of men of our tyme agreeth in sentence: threfolde in langage wherfore wyl-ling to redres the errours and vyces of *this oure Royallme of Englonde*: as the fore sayde composer and translatours hath done in their Contrees I haue taken vpon me». Barclay was much more a patriot than an ecclesiastic, and he warmly defends the interests of the people. His language, therefore, is remarkably plain and of genuine Saxon origin. He intended to write a book for the people.

Alexander Barclay was most probably a Scotchman by birth, though he became an Englishman by training<sup>1)</sup>. The year of his birth is stated to be 1476. Barclay took the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and then went abroad. When he came back to England, he entered the church. He did not find the promotions he merited. Barclay died in 1552 at Croydon where he had spent his youth. He mainly employed his pen for translations, and he has an excellent excuse for that: he only translates «to eschewe ydelnes». He meant to serve his country by thus acquainting it with foreign authors of renown. Nor was he a servile copist, but his work became in his hand a new and thoroughly English one. Besides the *Ship of Fools*, his *magnum opus*, his main works are the «Mirror of good manners», five books of «Eglogues» and a translation of Sallust's *Jugurtha*<sup>2)</sup>.

Thorough honesty and love of truth form the features of Barclay's moral character. The stern morality, however, which pervades his works rarely admits of touches of wit and humour. The mentioning of one of the very scarce instances

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<sup>1)</sup> for a detailed account of Barclay see Jamieson: *Life and Writings of Al. Barclay*, prefixed to his edition of Barclay's *Ship of Fools*.

<sup>2)</sup> We may add as a curiosity that Barclay also composed «An Introductory to write and pronounce French», printed in 1521. Palsgrave, the first authority in French grammar alludes to this grammatical tract in his «*Esclaircissement de la langue Francoyse*», 1530.

of higher irony, so current in Chaucer, may not be entirely out of place here. Barclay warns the idle and superfluous tattlers by the example of the pie that is betraying her nest and young birds by her chattering. His warning only addresses men, for :

touchynge wymen of them I wyll nought say  
They can nat speke, but ar as coy and styll  
As the horle wynde or clapper or a mylle.

Barclay differs in the outward form from his prototype. Brant's poem is written in the iambic metre (iambic dimeters or four stresses), whereas Barclay has adopted the seven-lined Chaucer stanza (a b a b b c c), in his own « Envoys » generally the octave stanza (ab ab bc bc). If we want to know how Barclay treats his subject after his own fashion we have only to compare his Prologue to that of Brant. Barclay uses his pattern in a most unconstrained manner, adding or suppressing at full liberty, and above all intended to « English » his work.

In modern times Barclay's « Ship of Fools » has been much neglected, a fact perhaps connected with the scarcity of copies and the great expense attendant upon new editions. This is Jamieson's opinion. Perhaps also these merely accidental circumstances are to be explained in a natural way. Barclay is wanting art and « pith ». Yet we may accept the sentence of Jamieson : « As a graphic and comprehensive picture of the social condition of pre-Reformation England ; as an important influence in the formation of our modern English tongue ; and as a rich and unique exhibition of early art, . . . . . this mediæval picture-poem is of unrivalled interest ». Prof. Ward, in the Dictionary of National Biography, drops the following, a little high-pitched, eulogium on Barclay : « The English Ship of Fools exercised an important direct influence upon our literature, pre-eminently helping to bury mediæval allegory in the grave which had long yawned before it, and to direct English authorship into the drama, essay and novel of character. »



## SKELTON AND BARCLAY.

We did not pretend to give a complete list of Barclay's works. But in one instance we regret to be left at a loss, because it would have been most interesting for our researches. A book «*Contra Skeltonum*», enumerated in Bale's *Summarium* (1548) of Barclay's works unfortunately has perished. We know, however, that a quarrel arose between the two ecclesiastics of so different casts of mind relating to the «*Boke of Phyllyp Sparowe*». Barclay found fault with the keen satirist's frivolity to bestow so much labour and wit on so slight a subject as a sparrow. That Skelton felt the sting elucidates from a passage in the «*Garlande of Laurell*». Again Barclay flew at his antagonist in the fourth Eglogue:

Then is he decked as Poete laureate,  
When stinking Thais made him her graduate.

Another hostile utterance against Skelton occurs in the «*Ship of Fools*» in the chapter «*Of the prowde and vayne bostynge of Folys*». The poet is about to give up his task, but there are still so many fools left behind who claim room in the ship: knights, doctors, school-headmasters, and «*Some other crowned as Poetis lawreat*». It cannot be denied that Skelton boasted somewhat unseemly of his laureateship, and we think not to go wrong in assuming that the dart aimed at the author of *Phyllyp Sparowe* the more so as in Brant the poet laureate is not named (chap. 76 *Von grossem ruemen*). Still we are inclined to see an allusion to Skelton in Barclay's chapter «*Of Bacbyters of good men*». It is directed against fools who bark at his book though they themselves have nothing in theirs but sin and viciousness. Barclay confesses that he does not pretend to be delectable or eloquent, his only ambition is to write a profitable book. Other writers, it is true, would prefer to have dregs and filth or chaff: no wonder, they were brought up with draff. The tenor of the whole passage may well be interpreted as an invective against the filthy Skelton, if we are allowed to give credit to the *Merry Tales* of Skelton. Similarly the last chapter of the «*Ship*» is likely to aim at Skelton in a particular sense. It reviles clergymen who wear the religious habit but are without

religion, or «without the thyng in dede». At the end follows the excuse of Barclay. Let the fools that despise and blame all things do as they like, for no man may content everybody. Barclay had at least the good will to induce men «unto vertue and goodnes», and he neither intended to write a tale of Robin Hood nor did it belong to his science or «cunning» to sing the *dirige* for Philip Sparrow. This last point directly hits our satirist whose somewhat loose morals (if we listen to the Merry Tales just mentioned) and entire liberty of speech in courtly and hierarchial matters shocked the moral and loyal Barclay.

## THE «BOKE OF THREE FOOLLES» AND BARCLAY'S «SHIP».

In entering upon a strict examination of the literary relations of Skelton and Barclay our steps become steadier and our decision assumes a stronger positiveness than in the foregoing instances. Now we can produce direct proofs to support the assertions we advance. The most obvious testimony of, at least, a partial dependency of Skelton upon Barclay is borne by Skelton himself in his «Boke of three fooles». A. Dyce, in his Notes to Skelton, has pointed out that this composition is a simple paraphrase of three chapters of the «Ship of Fools» of Alexander Barclay<sup>1</sup>). The three fools in question are those who wed old women for wealth, the envious and the voluptuous. Skelton only puts in verse the first stanza of each of the three corresponding chapters in Barclay. The rest is turned into prose. The contents in both authors are essentially, if not literally, the same. This may be best set forth by a simple juxtaposition in a single case. — Barclay, in the chapter «Of yonge folys that take olde wymen to theyr wyues, for theyr ryches» reads as follows:

Within our shyp that fole shall haue a hode  
Whiche an old wyfe taketh in maryage  
Rather for his ryches and his worldly gode  
Than for pure loue, or hope to haue lynage  
But suche youth as mary them selfe with age

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<sup>1</sup>) Jamieson appears to ignore this fact.

The profyte and pleasour of wedlocke lese certayne  
And worthely lyue in brawlynge stryfe and payne.

*Skelton*, in the stanza entitled «The fyrst foole» transcribes this passage in the following manner:

The man that doth wed a wyfe  
For her goodes and her rychesse,  
And not for lygnage femynatyfe,  
Procureth doloure and dystresse,  
With infynyte payne and heuynesse;  
For she wyll do hym moche sorowe,  
Bothe at eyn and at morowe.

This example, we hope, will suffice. That Skelton used Barclay's «Ship of Fools» and not the German *Narrenschiff* may be inferred from the circumstance that Skelton has copied a mistake or a misprint in Barclay by quoting the name of Theseus or Thesius (of Enuyous folys). Brant has the correct reading Thyestes, and does not mention his brother Atreus, whose name, on the contrary, occurs in Barclay as well as in Skelton. — The artistical value of the «Boke of three fooles» does not stand high, nor does it remind us of the pith and vigour of the author of «Colyn Cloute» or «Why come ye nat to Courte». The keen satirist, when imitating the serious Barclay, seems to undergo the somniferous effect of the preacher, and becomes a dull moralist in his turn. Or may we adopt the felicitous supposition of Herford, who thinks that Skelton followed the example of the German preacher Geiler von Kaisersberg in founding sermons on the «Ship of Fools»? The suggestion, at any rate, is ingenious enough. The seventh tale of the *Merry Tales* of Skelton shows us Skelton's most personal way of holding sermons. If the story has any foundation in fact, we may as well believe that Skelton made sermons on renowned literary works.

The «Boke of three fooles» raises other questions not entirely void of interest. Why did Skelton content himself with three follies only? and, why did he choose even these three ones? To the first question we may answer that Skelton did perhaps not feel strength enough to vie with Barclay, with whom, besides, he was on unfriendly terms, as we have seen. Perhaps he deemed it too heavy a task to treat the same subject in the same way as his rival, a subject which

appears to have enjoyed a wide popularity and which was not likely to be outdone by a slavish imitation. Skelton must have felt this after having paraphrased three chapters of Barclay's standard work. So, finding the task of doing another's work over again barren and meritless, he abandoned the subject after a short attempt, ready to return to it if another and more original conception should present itself to his mind. Of such an original conception the *Bowge of Courte* may be considered a manifestation. — Skelton still mentions, in his «*Garlande of Laurell*», a poem of his own which at first sight could make us believe that he once more came back on the same topic. In the enumeration of his works he says that he did not leave behind «*The Nacyoun of Foly*s». There is little doubt, however, that this only alludes to the «*Boke of three Fooles*». The inaccuracy of the title has nothing to puzzle us, for in the same «*Garlande*» Skelton is quoting his works in the same vague manner, as for instance when alluding to «*Speke Parrot*» he speaks of the «*Papin-gay*». Our conviction of the identity is still more confirmed by the circumstance that nowhere else in the «*Garlande*» Skelton hints at the «*Boke of three Fooles*», an omission which would seem a little surprising in an author who wrote sixteen hundred verses in honour of himself<sup>1</sup>). — To the other question, why Skelton chose just these three characters, Herford has dropped a very fine remark. Voluptuousness, he says, is for Skelton the vice of high rank and partly determines the fate of Magnificence. Envy also is a vice that has its strongest root in the higher classes of society; and wedding for wealth is a very common means of attaining high station and consideration. Here already we find the same tendency of the satirist to chastise court vices as in so many among his greater and harder works.

## THE BOWGE OF COURTE AND THE SHIP OF FOOLS.

The «*Bowge of Courte*» next is to be considered if we have to study the relations of Skelton's poems to the «*Ship*

<sup>1</sup>) Herford, on the contrary, considers the «*Nation of Fools*» as a work apart, but without alleging a reason for his opinion (*Lit. Relations*, p. 351).

of Fools», and here there can be no question of a direct imitation. The case most probably is an analogous one as we tried to explain it when we discussed «Cock Lorell's Bote». That the «Bowge» comes after the «Ship» in date is out of question. Nowhere Skelton gives us the slightest motive to suppose that he knew Brant's original itself. And what is still more concluding for the posteriority of the «Bowge of Courte» is the circumstance that it was even written after the «Garlande» which dates, as the title-page indicates, from 1523; as the «Bowge» does not form part of the list of Skelton's works in the «Garlande», the assumption of the posteriority of the «Bowge of Courte» seems quite ascertained.

We must now seek for a model of this often-named «Bowge of Courte». To Herford we are indebted for the first hints in our researches. He has happily pointed out that the chapter which most probably forms the direct prototype of the «Bowge» is that «Of flatterers and glosers» (Jamieson's ed. of Barclay's Ship, II. 210). Here these fools represent a distinct and special class of flatterers, namely flattering courtiers. Barclay himself sets them plainly apart from other fools:

For those that nowe themselfe present  
I thought to haue set them in a shyp before  
Where as ar seruautis fals and fraudulent  
But by no meane wyll they therto consent  
They coueyt a shyp for them selfe to attayne  
Therefore for them this shyp I now ordayne.

The next stanza expressively tells us that the servants of great lords will needs sail apart. For that they have their good reasons. They cannot well use their tricks and art among other people. For the same reason the seven courtiers of the «Bowge of Courte» conspire against the admission of Drede into their circle. From this fiery invective against court flatterers and slanderers Skelton may have borrowed more than one touch. The portrait of Fauell corresponds best to the model, for Fauel is full of flattery and well knows how to «fayne» a tale and is wearing a cloak lined with doubtful «doubleness»: all this we already find in Barclay, the «faynynge flaterer», the «fals talys», the «dowble tunge that can secretly whysper and rounde thynges ymagyned falsly».

There are some more chapters in Barclay which may at least have furnished the theme of the other characters in the «Bowge». So we have the chapter «Of disordred and ungoodly maners». These fools follow villany and all sin and inconvenience; another chapter stigmatizes gluttons and drunkards, who run to the wine- and ale-houses, where they quarrel and drink like beasts, are given to ribaldry or brawl and fighting. The same does Riot in the «Bowge», if not worse. But it is to be remarked that nowhere Barclay attempts to set before our eyes such vivid and picturesque characters as Skelton does everywhere. Let us compare the description of Envy in Barclay and of Disdain (nearly corresponding to that character) in Skelton. Barclay always proceeds in an abstract way. Instead of depicting some typical individual he analyses vice itself. Envy, in Barclay, is an abominable vice, undermining health; if rooted in a man's mind it makes him lean, his colour pale and wane. Envy is pale of look and countenance, his thin body of pale and blue colour, his look froward, his face without pleasance and peeling like scales. His words are untrue, his eyes sparkle with fire. He never looks on man with full eyes, but his heart is dull by furious wrath (Jamieson, I. 254). Skelton treats this vice several times and with an extraordinary power. Here we have Disdain, one of the seven courtiers of the «Bowge»: He frowns, he stares, he stamps where he stands. Dread fears lest he be mad. Disdain threatens poor Dread and challenges him to a duel. With his sword he promises to shave Dread's beard; he will «shake him out of his clothes». This simple comparison illustrates the entire difference of the two minds, Barclay's moralizing teaching and Skelton's dramatic power. In «Phyllyp Sparowe» we once more meet with a description of «odyous Enui»:

That euermore wil ly,  
And say cursedly;  
With his ledder ey, and chekes dry;  
With vysage wan,  
As swarte as tan;  
His bones crake,  
Leane as a rake;  
His gummes rusty  
Are full vnlusty etc.

The first instance from Skelton showed us the envious man, the second picture is that of Envy itself. But in each of these topics Skelton hurries us along by the power of his satirical gift.

In the almost innumerable crowd of Barclay's «Ship» Skelton may have found here and there an idea or an image which would serve for his purpose. Most, however, of his «Bowge» is certainly of his own, and it would be a difficult and wearisome task to point out step by step the petty analogies in the two works. Such a criticism might be styled by right love's labours lost. Yet we think it proper to point out some few other congruities which we produce only in order to state that Skelton arranged after his fashion some of Barclay's topics. Barclay, as a man of church and good education, has in his «Ship» a chapter against the bad custom of a certain kind of gentlemen attending divine service with hawks on their fists or leading dogs at leashes. This abuse was a matter of scandal for the honest people, and justly so. Skelton himself in this point entirely agrees with his opponent. Among his works we find a very mordacious pamphlet against a disturber of the devotion of the good people. Dyce (Notes to Skelton) presumes that the poem «Ware the Hauke» was called forth by a real event. Skelton was the more angry as the offender himself was a clergyman. Barclay, in his chapter of «Inprofitable Bokes» seems to allude to the same event. He sorrily is aware that the greatest fools are first promoted: «For if one can flatter, and bere a hawke on his Fyst | He shal be made Person of Honyngton or of Clyst». And again in the «Abusion of the Spirituale» Barclay sighs: The order of priesthood is troubled by fools, the honour of religion everywhere decays. This chapter of the «abusion of spirituale» leads us to another comparison. The very same complaint of the decay of priesthood and religion especially under the influence of the courtiers, but in a much sharper tone, is brought forth in Skelton's «Colyn Cloute».

## COLYN CLOUTE AND BARCLAY.

Colyn Cloute, another Piers Plowman of the age, asks in the outset what it can avail to drive forth a snail, or to

write a book reviling vices. If he speaks plain one says he is lacking brain; if he hits the nail on the head people will say the devil is dead. Nevertheless Colyn Cloute will come forth and pour out his whole bag of learning. As far as he can see there is wrong with each degree. Temporality and spirituality accuse each other. The prelates are so haughty, and the greater part for sloth. Forgotten are the lessons Thomas a Becket gave them! Some say that churchmen hunt in parks and hawk on larks. They have other pastimes still worse. During Lent they eat all kinds of meat. The ignorance of the religious orders is scandalous. Instead of attending their holy offices they get drunk. Their primes and hours leap out from their lips «like sawdust». Oh! not all of them behave thus, but it is the general rule. Some of these ecclesiastics cannot even decline their name. All this, Colyn Cloute has witnessed when walking about in the country. Simony is only considered a child's play. The pope and the bishops live in magnificence, while they yoke the poor people with summons, citations and excommunications. It is said that the prelates sit on thrones like *princes aquilonis*. The common wealth in the meantime decays. Good laws are subverted, and good reason is perverted. Things go on as ill with the nunneries. Strange rumours circulate on the conduct of the prelates. The mass-money is spent among wanton lasses; the Turk could not do more. For shame! you prelates, that should be the lanterns of light. Now will I sharpen my pen against such rebels of the Holy Church! Good faith is abandoned, many bend to the new reformatory lore and have a smack of Luther's sack<sup>1</sup>). Spirituality and temporality are at variance. The latter asserts the church has too much and they too little. They bring in materialities, and qualified qualities of pluralities and of *tot quottes*. They will grasp more and more, and the pride of these prelates grows intolerable. Lords are abused by them, knaves knighted by them. They take upon them to rule both king and emperor. Beware of too great insolence, for fortune turns the ball and very often honour has a great fall. This evidently points at Cardinal Wolsey. — Alas! why do the prelates sit still and suffer all this ill? The needy and learned servants of the church have but the trouble and are poorly remunerated for their work,

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<sup>1</sup>) Sack was a sort of wine (see Dyce, Notes to Skelton, s. v.)



while the wealthy divines boast of their ignorance and enjoy their large revenues and benefits. The four orders of friars do not escape severe censure. Many a friar only preaches for gain, and flatters for a new coat or for good eating and drinking. The bishops ought to use their influence to put in order this state of things, but they are themselves covetous and ambitious and remain silent. «As far as they dare set | All is fish that comes to net.» They build royally and display an unbecoming splendour: the invective once more is particularly addressed to Wolsey. It becomes still plainer in the warning that it is a busy thing for one man to rule a king; and a little farther on he upbraids him with his partial promoting (see before). The attack has become hotter and more personal. Yet, as he apologizes, his griefs only concern those that do amiss. Colyn has named nobody. Therefore no one has a right to blame him. God send them his grace who feel themselves sick or touched «on the quicke». A last terrible blow falls on all the offenders of God. The tortures of hell await them. Then, after this onslaught, our satirist thinks it best to withdraw his pen and to retire, for he wants rest:

The forecastell of my shyp  
Shall glyde, and smothely slyp  
Out of the wawes wod  
Of the stormy flod;  
Shote anker, and lye at rode, etc.

Let us compare to this analyse of Colyn Cloute the chapter of Barclays «Ship» entitled «Of abusion of spiritualte»: Every man nowadays thinks it best to promote his son to priesthood, if his mind is a little weak or his body misshaped. What is the consequence of this abuse? These unworthy servants of God only hope to live in ease and sloth. They lead a vicious and wretched life. The honour of religion everywhere is decaying. Caitiffs and courtiers who never went to school are first promoted to priesthood. Falsehood and flattery are brought out of the stable straight to the altar. There are more priests than learned men. Courtiers that become priests give offence to the public by their pride and disdain of virtue. They are as presumptuous and proud as *Lucifer*. The prelates are the cause of this misgovernment. It is their cursed hunger for silver and gold, their covetousness and ambition. Simony is practised every day, priesthood is sold to boys and

fools. Wisdom and knowledge are considered but poor qualifications. Chastity and humility are dead; flattering falsehood paints the faces of the men of the church. The holy orders of monks and friars have decayed of late: their chief study is to fill their wretched bellies. Rash and unwise men govern the church in a disorderly manner. But take care! Those that go on doing amiss and do not mend their bad lives shall, after their death, meet with the reward of hell. And in his own «Envoy» Barclay exhorts the priest to shun these vices and follies. The principal root of evil springs from the ignorance of priests, and for this the negligence and unscrupulousness of the bishops are chiefly answerable. — Compare besides Barclay's Conclusion of the «Ship»:

Our shyp here leuyth the sees brode  
By help of God almyghty and quyetly  
At Anker we lye within the rode. —

It cannot be fairly denied that in the two passages just analysed there are great analogies. There are even so many common ideas that we are quite convinced the analogy is not an accidental one. In both texts the same complaints, or nearly the same: simony, ignorance of the clergy, haughtiness of prelates, their bad manners, the bishops deaf and dumb because they themselves are selfish and profit by this state of things; in both also the exhortation to mend or else the threatening of the pain of hell. Two or three special analogies deserve a mention apart. We find a curious accordance in the *princes aquilonis* (Colyn Cloute) and the prelates proud as *Lucifer* (in Barclay). This expression *princes aquilonis* is only a paraphrase for Lucifer, for the fallen angel's abode generally was supposed to lie in the north. So in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, v. 755—760:

At length into the limits of the north  
They came; and Satan to his royal seat ...  
The palace of great *Lucifer*.

In Chaucer's *Freres Tale*, v. 115, the fiend lives «in the north contre». And *Piers Plowman*, Pass. I, v. 118, has the passage:

Ponam pedem in *aquilone*, et similis ero altissimo<sup>1)</sup>. —

<sup>1)</sup> for these references we are indebted to Skeat, Notes to *Piers Plowman*, B-Text.

Another parallelism can be stated in the passages where the expression *tot quottes* occurs. *Tot quot* means a general dispensation (Halliwell). In Skelton the passage runs thus:

... And bryng in materialities  
And qualyfyed qualytes;  
Of pluralytes,  
Of tryalytes,  
And of *tot quottes*<sup>1)</sup>.

Barclay has a whole chapter « Of them whiche charge them selfe with many benefycis », where a similar thought is thus expressed:

... Than if this lorde haue in hym fauoure, he hath hope  
To haue another benefyce of gretter dignyte  
And so maketh a fals suggestyon to the pope  
For a *Tot quot* outhere els a pluralyte etc.<sup>2)</sup> —

Again we have a specimen of a close resemblance in the description of flattering friars in Skelton and Barclay. Skelton (Colyn Cloute, v. 840 ff.):

*Flatteryng*e for a newe cote  
And for to haue his fees;  
Some to gather *chese*;  
Loth they are to lese  
Eyther corne or malte; etc.

and Barclay in his Fifth Egloge:

We geue wool and *cheese*, our wiues coyne and egges,  
When freers *flatter* and prayse their proper legges<sup>3)</sup>.

## CONCLUSION.

We do not pretend to have exhausted the accordances in the two authors we were to compare. We think the specimens brought forth sufficient to prove that there actually

<sup>1)</sup> cf. also « Why come ye nat to Courte », v. 125:

We shall haue a *tot quot*  
From the Pope of Rome.

<sup>2)</sup> Jamieson, I. 160.

<sup>3)</sup> quoted from Dyce's notes.

exist connections between Skelton and Barclay, and that the former did not disdain to borrow from his rival. Perhaps the root of the deep dissension between the two ecclesiastics springs therefrom. But the reader has seen that Skelton's loans only extend on details, not on his poetical compositions as a whole. On all hands Skelton is true to himself, and never falls into a slavish imitation (if we except the «Boke of the three fooles», of second or third-rate value). If he has borrowed from Barclay, he has still more adopted from greater masters, especially from Langland. More than once already we have pointed out characteristic similitudes. It would lead beyond our task to enter into a particular examination of this question. But the hypothesis that Langland's *Piers Plowman* furnished the original idea of the «Bowge of Courte» might well be produced. In *Passus II* of *Piers Plowman* we have a very similar society to that of the *Bowge of Courte*. *Lady Meed* forms the centre of the rout consisting of *Wrong*, *Fauel*, *Simony*, *Civil*, *Liar* and *Guile*. — *Fortune* is courted by *Fauel*, *Suspect*, *Haruy* *Hafter*, *Disdain*, *Riot*, *Dissimulation*, and *Subtlety*. And if *Piers Plowman* is the poet's representative, *Dread* in the *Bowge of Courte* is the mask which covers the poet himself. Yet we do not venture to carry our parallel farther on, though we hope the suggestion is not quite devoid of interest. As we hinted already, *Colyn Cloute*<sup>1)</sup> also belongs to the family of *Piers Plowman*, let us take him for his great-grandson. -- As to the influence of Chaucer, it would be surprising if there were no traces to be found in our satirist's works. Those we have referred to, however, contained relatively few of them. As a reason for this fact we might allege that the good-humoured Chaucer did not offer «pith» enough for the virulent pamphleteer and satirist. He would fetch his weapons elsewhere, and with preference in the lower range of literature. It is one of our author's characteristic features that his style is so rich in proverbial lore and popular sayings. Many of these stamped expressions are, no doubt, of Skelton's own mint. The short Skeltonial metre, as in *Colyn Cloute*, or in *Elynour Rummyng*, admirably suits the subject treated. There the poet stands unrivalled, and we do not hesitate to declare that we are a

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<sup>1)</sup> cf Spencer, «The Shepherd's Calendar» and «Colin Cloute come home again».

little sorry that the Bowge of Courte is written in the official Chaucerian metre. Disraeli, who does not even mention the Bowge of Courte, goes too far in saying: «the magic of the poet is confined to his spell: at his first step out of it, he falls to the earth, never to recover himself». (Amenities of Literature.) / Skelton, however, is only of first-rate value in his own familiar form. And as an original and entirely genuine production the smart and filthy and even nauseous Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng stands high above the conventional, worn-out and pompous parade of the wearisome and decent Garlande of Laurell. In the former poem we see the poet at home, and as it were in his *négligé*; in the latter we only look at his parade-dress. We prefer the every-day coat, for in it we better enjoy our liberty and ease.





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